

lacquered safe, reposing patiently in a Capitol storeroom for these last hundred years, fanned open. But these ended up opening only to another set of locked doors, so all they could access was a written message: "It is the wish of Mrs. Deihm that this safe may remain closed until July 4, 1976."

Crushingly appropriate, that anticlimax. It seemed like nothing worked in America anymore. People's lives were not working; the previous November, Ann Landers received a letter from a young couple who asked the columnist to poll her readership to ask if having a child would be worth it—"Were the rewards enough to make up for the grief?" The letters poured in, and on January 23, she tallied up the score: 70 percent told her *no*. Wrote a forty-year-old with young twins, "I was an attractive, fulfilled career woman before I had these kids. Now I'm an overly exhausted nervous wreck." Said a seventy-year-old mother of five, "Not one of our children has given us any pleasure. God knows we did our best, but we were failures as parents, and they are failures as people."

Failures as people: millions of Americans felt that this description fit them to a T. Seeking a solution, any solution, they eagerly forked over their cash to any huckster who promised release, the quicker and more effortlessly the better: therapies like "bioenergetics" ("The Revolutionary Therapy That Uses the Language of the Body to Heal the Problems of the Mind"); Primal Scream (which held that when patients shrieked in a therapist's office, childhood trauma could be reexperienced, then released; John Lennon and James Earl Jones were fans); or Transcendental Meditation, which promised that deliverance could come if you merely closed your eyes and chanted a mantra (the "TM" organization sold personal mantras, each supposedly "unique," to hundreds of thousands of devotees). Or "religions" like the Church Universal and Triumphant, or the Reverend Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church, or "Scientology"—this last one invented by a science fiction writer, reportedly on a bet. Devotees paid cash to be "audited" by practitioners who claimed the power—if, naturally, you paid for enough sessions—to remove "trauma patterns" accreted over the 75 million years that had passed since Xenu, tyrant of the Galactic Confederacy, deposited billions of people on earth next to volcanoes and detonated hydrogen bombs inside those volcanoes, thus scattering harming "body thetans" to attach to the souls of the living, which once unlatched allowed practitioners to cross the "bridge to total freedom" and "unlimited creativity." Another religion, the story had it, promised "perfect knowledge"—though its adherents' public meeting was held up several hours because

none of them knew how to run the movie projector. Gallup reported that six million Americans had tried TM, five million had twisted themselves into yoga poses, and two million had sampled some sort of Oriental religion.

And hundreds of thousands of Americans in eleven cities had plunked down \$250 for the privilege being screamed at as "assholes." "est"—Erhard Seminars Training, named after the only-in-America hustler who invented it, Werner Erhard, originally Jack Rosenberg, a former used-car and encyclopedia salesman who had tried and failed to join the Marines (this was not incidental) at the age of seventeen, and experienced a spiritual rebirth one morning while driving across the Golden Gate Bridge ("I realized that I knew nothing. . . . In the next instant—after I realized that I knew nothing—I realized that I knew everything")—promised "to transform one's ability to experience living so that the situations one had been trying to change or had been putting up with, clear up just in the process of life itself," all that in just sixty hours, courtesy of a for-profit corporation whose president had been general manager of the Coca-Cola Bottling Company of California and a former member of the Harvard Business School faculty.

A journalist decided to go through the process and write a book about it. He described showing up at 9 A.M. with 239 others at a Howard Johnson's conference room in Boston for the first of four all-day sessions over two successive weekends, and at the start being forced to leave his watch at the door. He sat down in a hard-backed chair—the organizers made sure these chairs were uncomfortable—and heard the rules he would have to agree to in order to stay. They were read out in a mechanical drone: no food or drink (the meal break came at nine at night); no talking; no taking notes, chewing gum, reading, sitting next to someone you knew, or making any trips to the bathroom (the bathroom break came after twelve hours); don't discuss what happens in est training with anyone other than est graduates. Over those sixty hours everything would be controlled, right down to how acolytes were to hold the microphone. ("Stand up. Extend your arms. Now make a fist with your left hand around your right thumb. Now with your left thumb extended outward. . . .")

"Keep your ass in the room . . . follow the instructions, and take what you get. . . . The reasons why our lives don't work, the reason why you're assholes, is that you don't keep your agreements! . . . You assholes keep your agreements with me and your lives will work. Is everybody clear on that now?"

The trainer invited questions. The acolytes, careful to extend their

left thumbs outward, asked some. A woman said she'd been studying Buddhism for seven years, and that if she believed in anything, it was the Buddha. . . .

"Buddha is dogshit until you experience being the Buddha!"

(He added, "You women would be a lot happier if you realized that you get paid to clean the house and cook dinner.")

He asked who thought they knew why their arms moved when they raised their hands.

"The muscles contract," someone returned.

"They do, huh? What makes them contract?"

"They receive stimulus from the brain," someone offered.

"Wait a minute," proposed the trainer, who went only by the name "Brendan." "How do you know you have a brain?"

There was a pause, and someone named Richard, confident he'd figured out the game, stood up and answered, "Because that's the way we came into the universe."

"What universe?! You people don't know anything, do you? Do you?"

Richard returned to his seat.

A man with "Steve" written on his name tag raised his hand: "I don't see any blacks. I don't see any Chicanos. I don't see—"

"Brendan" cut him off: "My answer to you, Steve, is that anyone can take this training. And you know something, Steve? You're the one who hates niggers."

A pert young woman objected: "It's not necessary to use that kind of language."

He imitated her, mocking: "*Oh, it isn't necessary to use that kind of language.* I got that, Mary, so you can wipe that sexy little smile off your face." He addressed his congregation: "I want you to notice Mary's act: press her buttons and she smiles." He addressed her: "You've been smiling all your life, Mary, and where has it gotten you? Right here!"

Mary whimpered; Brendan responded.

"Press another button and Mary starts to cry. Press another button and she screws. . . . Mary, you ain't nothin' but a little China doll. Do you get that? Thank you, Mary, you can sit down. . . .

"I was only using Mary as an example. There isn't one person in here that I couldn't manipulate as easily as I manipulated Mary."

He snarled, "It ain't gonna get no better in here. It's going to get a lot worse, and if you have any notions about not keeping your agreements, remember that you haven't got what you came here for, and I do. I've already got your two hundred and fifty bucks. It's going to get so bad

in here that the only thing that's going to keep you in your seats is your money. Is that clear?"

On the second day came the "truth process." Laying his charges down on the floor, the trainer, after a guided meditation leading them to the painful emotions and problems they were there to try to resolve, would command them to "take our fingers off the repress button," and the journalist described the moans and groans that followed as "like listening to a secret sound track of Dante's *Inferno*—as if someone had plugged an audio hookup into the purgatorial paintings of Hieronymus Bosch." (The staff kept bright silver barf bags on hand, just in case.) Next came the "danger process," though he was not allowed to write about that—perhaps because it sounded legally actionable: a participant was ordered to the stage to stand straight as a ramrod, then one of a special team of "confronters" stood nose to nose with the frightened trainee, staring menacingly into his eyes, as another shouted insults; a separate team of "body catchers" caught these trainees when their legs invariably gave out from the strain. Then, at the conclusion of the second day, all would lie on the floor again, this time to imagine each was terrified of everyone else, then that they were all terrified of *everyone* and *everything* in the world; and more Hieronymus Bosch screaming ensued.

For those who came back the next weekend—most did; they had invested \$250, after all—there came a tedious lecture, which went on as long as ten hours, in which the trainer expounded ("*I'll tell you everything I know about life*") on the est theory of the mind as a perfectly plastic machine that could manifest anything it deemed true and obliterate anything that it deemed false, because nothing, really, was real:

"The opposite of reality is the experience of illusion. And what happens when we look at our experience and tell the truth about it? It disappears. . . . So when you experience the truth, you know it's nothing but an illusion!"

A skeptic asked, "So how did all this stuff get here?" He was answered, "It never did." Naturally.

Amid delighted laughter and shrieks of epiphany, the trainer—this one was named "Rod"—asked for a show of hands of those who had "gotten it." Those who did not raise their hands were confronted one more time: "I don't get it," one might say. "Good," he would hear in return. "There's nothing to get. So you get it." At which he might decide, triumphantly—he had paid \$250 for this, after all—"I get it! So 'getting it' is whatever you get," and, yes, the trainer would literally respond like this: "If that's what you got."

The journalist, whose name was Robert Hargrove, concluded, "The est training is a process in which you are literally driven right out of your mind, and there is nothing you can do about it except resist." And room the following weekend and be able to say, 'I am the cause of my own experience' and mean it. . . . They have spent their whole lives playing the victim, but somehow in the process of the training, that attitude and the darkness that was in their faces would disappear." He wrote that he "realized that in my whole life I've never before seen people for what they are." And that he now enjoyed experiencing "a semipermanent state of meditation in which I began to notice more things" and in which he became "more conscious in more and more areas of my life . . . accompanied by the physical sensation that someone was lifting an enormous rock off the top of my head." And that "the value my wife and I got out of it would have made it a knockdown bargain at twice the price." Even the Howard Johnson's cigarette-burned and coffee-stained rug transfixed him: "How many saints and sadhus had attained enlightenment on a snowcapped mountain or a river bank or in a coconut grove and had become so attached to the 'spirit of the place' that they forgot that the experience was within them?" As Hargrove wrote in the preface to *est: Making Life Work*—one of at least five books from major paperback houses extolling est that year—*est: Four Days to Make Your Life Work; The est Experience; est: the Movement and the Man; The Book of est* (except, oops, "this is a book, and the est experience cannot result from reading any book")—"est was like a laser; it took all the light in the rainbow and condensed it into a single beam." Because, "At the moment that you 'get' the training, you know what the self really is."

But how did it work? Don't ask, Hargrove insisted. The attempt would forge but one more illusion. "It's like a photograph of an ice-cream cone. If you try to describe its flavor in terms of the form, data, or processes with which it is made, it is not likely that you will be understood. The only way to experience the satisfaction of eating an ice cream cone is to eat one."

Some derided est as a crypto-fascist cult of personality. Others thought it was a CIA front designed to drain Americans of their will to make political change, by convincing them that social problems were all in their heads. But est's evangelists included, in addition to John Denver and Jerry Rubin, such respectable figures as Buzz Aldrin, the second man to walk on the moon, and Watergate's John Dean. Not everyone among the 100,000 who had already taken est (there was a waiting list of 12,000) agreed that it helped them. But as two social scientists dis-

covered when they researched a book published two years later, called *Snapping*, on America's "epidemic of sudden personality change," it was hard to find anyone who would say est hadn't helped him. For as all good con men knew, no one wants to admit to having been conned.

They found one person harmed by the program who was willing to talk, a middle-aged, college-educated divorcee desperate for meaning now that her kids had grown—a description she shared with Sara Jane Moore, whose preferred route to redemption had led her to the attempted assassination of Gerald Ford. The woman they interviewed tried TM and saw "glimpses of what it would be like to live on a different level"—until that rosy glow faded, and she discovered "encounter groups" and learned for the first time "what it was like to be close with another woman"—until that wore off and she tried est, which she almost abandoned after the first weekend produced shooting pains in her legs: "If I hadn't paid two hundred dollars I wouldn't have gone back." After the second weekend, though, she believed herself to have been cured of her arthritis, and was left in a state of ecstasy that lasted the week—until she suffered a dissociative breakdown, her first experience of mental illness in her life, then a manic episode in which, first, she couldn't stop dancing, and then began babbling in a made-up language until she ended up in a mental hospital for the first of two stints. The first scientific study of est confirmed that several such cases had presented themselves to hospital psychiatric wards. When *Snapping's* authors found her she was "was still anxious—and still searching. . . . 'I've been experiencing some discomfort and tension in my body and I've been waking up with feelings of anger,'" she said. But she would not give up. Next she was going to try acupuncture.

Maybe, just maybe, *that* would work. Or maybe it would not. Maybe she could read one of the offerings from the *Psychology Today* Book Club: *How to Be Your Own Best Friend; How to Be Awake and Alive; The You That Could Be; You Are Not Alone; Creative Coping; Getting It Together; New Mind, New Body*. A blunt fact of the Bicentennial year: this bottomless supply of Americans for whom the basic institutions of society had failed so badly that they longed to become different people entirely. Which made it a hell of a time for a nationwide birthday party.

MAYBE IT WOULD BE EASIER TO CELEBRATE, SOME SILENT POLITICAL force seemed to dictate, if people could only forget what they had learned about their nation over the past two years. Like what they had learned about the CIA. So it was that the first big news story of 1976 did

not concern the excesses of secret intelligence. It concerned the alleged excesses of those seeking to contain such intelligence.

Inside the Company: CIA Diary, the memoir of spy-turned-radical Philip Agee, had come out in the United States in July despite government attempts to suppress it. In the book a twelve-year veteran of the agency working South and Central America chronicled his growing realization "that millions of people all over the world had been killed or had their lives destroyed by the C.I.A. and the institutions it supports"—as when he was ordered to fabricate out of whole cloth a report "establishing" Communist infiltration of the Uruguayan government. He turned the document over to a police chief, then heard screams of torture coming from the next room, from one of the supposed infiltrators he'd named in his report—the dawn of his apostasy. At the end of the story he explained that he "wrote it as a contribution to socialist revolution." A handy appendix revealed the CIA's hand in as many front groups as he could recollect, complete with proper names; an analyst thus concluded in the agency's classified review of the book that he was the CIA's "first real defector in the classic sense of the word."

By the end of 1975, from his hideout in Communist Cuba, Agee had joined a movement. Anti-CIA activists, including the novelist Norman Mailer, published a magazine, *counterspy*, and Agee wrote in the winter issue, "The most effective and important systematic effort to counter the CIA that can be undertaken right now [is] the identification, exposure, and neutralization of its people working abroad." One of the people Agee's article thus identified was Richard Welch, whom he fingered as the station chief in Lima, Peru.

By then, however, Welch was not the station chief in Lima. He was the station chief in Athens—where, two days before Christmas, he was ambushed and assassinated by masked men outside his home.

Agee's article was apparently merely coincidental to the attack—and in Athens, Welch's cover had already, independently, been blown (as, in fact, it had been in Lima), not least because he lived in a house whose CIA identity was a matter of public knowledge (an Athens newspaper had already identified him as the station chief along with publishing his address and phone number). The work being done by the House and Senate select committees on intelligence had even less to do with it. No matter. Just as Richard Nixon had exploited the POWs—"to restore the military to its proper position"—a complex story was cynically distorted into a crystalline patriotic allegory. Immediately, presidential press secretary Ron Nessen insinuated that the intelligence committees' carelessness was responsible for the tragedy. The plane bearing Welch's

coffin was timed to touch down at Andrews Air Force Base for live coverage on the morning news, and was greeted by an Air Force honor guard. (Just like Nixon used to do, President Ford had the plane circle for fifteen minutes to get the timing just right.) *Time* had already eulogized Welch as a "scholar, wit, athlete, spy"—a regular James Bond.

"Never before," Daniel Schorr announced on the CBS news on December 30, "had a fallen secret agent come home as such a public hero," and it was only the beginning. Over the protests of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Welch's burial broke military protocol by taking place at Arlington Cemetery, starring more honor guards, dozens of flags, the flower of the American defense establishment, and the very same horse-drawn caisson used for the interment of President Kennedy. President Ford escorted the veiled widow at the funeral. Conservative senators demanded congressional investigations; Frank Church's conservative Idaho colleague James McClure toured the state to lecture Church's constituents, saying that such murders were just what happened when liberals get control of congressional investigations. Hundreds of telegrams and letters—some consisting of the single word "Murderer!"—flooded across his transom from angry citizens alert to the administration's insinuations that it all must have been the congressional investigators' fault. A supposedly adversarial press piled on, too, especially the *Washington Post*. In 1974 it brought down a president; now it ran thirteen stories in the week after Welch's death following the administration line, and an editorial labeling the death "[t]he entirely predictable result of the disclosure tactics chosen by certain American critics of the agency." Wrote the *Post*'s admirably independent ombudsman, Charles Seib, "The press was used to publicize what in its broad effect was an attack on itself."

Church, thrown on the defensive, called for criminal sanctions against those who identified secret agents. And it all happened just as the committees were drawing up their final reports and recommendations regarding intelligence reform—terrified, now, that further disclosure of any secret would discredit the entirety of their work.

That was no accident. It was an orchestrated campaign—one taking advantage, not of the committees' recklessness (in fact they were remarkably free from leaks) but of their very deliberateness, the months of quiet investigation and backroom executive sessions that provided an opening for White House propaganda to utterly blindsides these earnest tribunes of reform. A high-ranking CIA official named David Atlee Phillips, who had specialized in propaganda, quit the agency to organize retirees into an apparently independent lobby. Though they were

in the shadowlands of espionage, nothing could be so straightforward. They actually worked in harness with a president who used words like "crippling" and "dismantling" in his every reference to the intelligence investigations. And by the time the White House began all but dancing on Richard Welch's grave, Phillips's six-hundred-member Association of Retired Intelligence Officers was ready to wave the bloody shirt on the president's behalf—in speeches, letters to the editor, and canned op-eds from a forty-eight-page guide, all pressing the message that the expansion of the suspicious circles into the sacred precincts of intelligence was putting the nation's heroes in danger. Hardly three weeks after Welch's death, the momentum for reining in the intelligence community was at all but a standstill—just as planned. "REVAMPING THE CIA: EASIER SAID THAN DONE," as the *New York Times* headlined on January 18. And so, after one more turn of the screw, it would turn out to be.

SENATOR CHURCH HAD HOPED BY THEN TO BE OTHERWISE OCCUPIED. IT was the presidential primary season. This spook-chasing that he had hoped would become his royal road to front-runner status had proved interminable: his committee had missed the first deadline—September 1, 1975—before the public hearings had even begun; it now looked as though the final report would not be out before spring, and so he hadn't been able to prepare a presidential campaign at all. Now he just hoped to enter sometime early in spring in a late-breaking swoop, win a few primaries, and present himself as the consensus rescuer should the convention in New York City descend into unmanageable rancor. That didn't seem at all unlikely, given that by then there were nine Democratic candidates prowling New Hampshire, and eleven who on January 2 drew the first matching checks from the federal Treasury—but not a clear front-runner in the bunch.

First, however, would come Iowa, a new historical development: it became important only in 1972, when George McGovern's campaign realized that a victory in this small, unrepresentative state's January precinct caucuses—an event merely preliminary to the state convention that actually selected delegates, 47 out of the convention total of 3,008—could be held up as a signal that their man was the season's front-runner, giving them momentum going into the much more firmly established primary in the Granite State. And so now, the political sages watched the Hawkeye State like hawks—for instance, eight days before the January 19 precinct caucuses, when Senator Birch Bayh of Indiana won a straw poll in Sioux City with the help of the state's established labor unions, which pundits said put him ahead.

That, however, was pretty much the last that was heard of Birch Bayh in 1976. Which said a hell of a lot about 1976.

On paper, no one looked better than Bayh. Young and handsome, but also experienced and accomplished, the blue-eyed forty-eight-year-old third-term liberal was elected to the Indiana house of representatives at age twenty-four and moved up to become the youngest speaker of the house in state history. In the U.S. Senate he became a star on the Judiciary Committee, where he shepherded two constitutional amendments to passage, a record (the twenty-fifth, establishing an orderly process of presidential succession, and the twenty-sixth, enfranchising eighteen-year-olds); passed a landmark law opening up interscholastic athletic competition to women; and won two straight historic fights against President Nixon's attempts to put Southern segregationists on the Supreme Court (and thus raced to the top of Nixon's Enemies List). He'd explored a presidential run in 1972, which seasoned him; since then he'd been laboring mightily on the Equal Rights Amendment, a measure enormously popular with the Democratic base.

But he also lived in Washington. Which was Gomorrah. And worked in the United States Capitol—which was where mountebanks and blackguard lawyers held court.

The last three elected presidents—JFK, LBJ, and Nixon—had all once been senators, and it had once been the conventional wisdom that the next several presidents were likely to be former senators, too. That was then. Now Birch Bayh was forced to make a virtue of necessity. His dimpled face, set plain against a stark bare backdrop, stared straight into the camera in his TV commercial:

"To listen to the other candidates, none of them are politicians. Even the ones who've held public office say they're not politicians. Well, I'm Birch Bayh—and I'm a politician. It took a good politician to stop Nixon's plan to pack the Supreme Court. And it's going to take a good politician to break up the big oil companies and get jobs for unemployed workers and hold food prices in line. The question isn't whether you're a politician, but what kind of politician makes a good president."

Following the fashion, he promised "moral leadership." His most prominent endorser—though traditional endorsements were unfashionable, too, this year—was Watergate prosecutor Archie Cox, who said, "Trust in government is not to be had for the asking, nor is it gained by the politics of image. It begins with the trust that those who govern repose in people. Only a man of character can restore that confidence. Only a man of openness and courage can bring us together."

Which was all well and good. But senators are forced to take stands,

or are at least forced to appear to take stands—they leave paper trails. Bayh would have preferred to avoid one on, say, an ideological minefield like abortion. But as chairman of the Senate judiciary subcommittee on constitutional amendments, overseeing hearings the previous fall on the proposed "human life" amendment, he came under vituperative criticism from women's groups who claimed he was giving more time to "pro-life" than "pro-choice" forces—like the four Catholic cardinals who, in one heavily publicized session, testified that abortions should be illegal even to save the life of the mother. "The life of a woman, they argued," according to Hearst columnist Marianne Means, "is not as important as the life of a fetus, which might turn out to be a male." After the subcommittee voted not to let the amendment proceed, pro-lifers—"There is no special interest lobby as well-organized, as single minded, or as vicious to its opponents as the anti-abortion activists," Means wrote—accused the Catholic senator, who had never declared himself publicly one way or the other on the issue, of tanking it on purpose. He soon found himself barraged by seven thousand letters from angry constituents on both sides—this just on the eve of entering the race, which he did too late, given the new campaign finance laws limiting individual donors to one thousand dollars, advantaging those who'd been plugging away the longest.

And so, a week after finishing a distant third in the New Hampshire primary, this onetime logical front-runner permanently suspended his campaign.

A GOVERNOR WHO HAD BEEN OUT OF OFFICE SEVERAL YEARS SEEMED TO be in a more propitious position—for instance, for avoiding those ideological minefields.

On New Year's Day, Jimmy Carter arrived for his latest visit to Iowa in a blizzard and windchill of forty-five below zero, suffering from an intestinal bug. His personal aide stepped off the plane in Des Moines having left his coat in Atlanta, where it was 103 degrees. They made their way to an event in the basement of the Holy Spirit Church in the little town of Creston. After his speech, Carter was asked by a concerned churchwoman about a recent interview he had given to a Catholic publication in which he said he personally considered abortion "morally wrong," but also opposed a constitutional amendment to ban it, but *did* support a "national statute" of some sort. In Creston, a reporter heard him tell the woman, speaking "even more softly than usual," that "under certain circumstances" he would support a state abortion ban like the one passed in his native Georgia, even though that

had been struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court. He then issued a clarifying statement insisting that he had "had a very consistent position on abortion for several years," encompassing his personal opposition, his opposition to both the proposed constitutional amendment banning all abortions and another that would give states the right to ban it themselves, and endorsing more wider availability "of contraception devices for those who believe in their use" and of "[b]etter adoption procedures to minimize abortion." Which was even more confusing. It was then that the comedian Pat Paulsen began telling the joke about how officials wanted to put Jimmy Carter on Mount Rushmore. "But they didn't have room for two faces."

But voters, apparently, did not agree. "Ambiguous though it was," Evans and Novak soon were reporting, "Carter's reply gave pro-life forces more than they get from other major Democratic contenders here," and "also explains the growing outrage among Carter's famous opponents here over the little peanut farmer from Plains, Georgia, outsharking them by winning anti-abortion liberals." Leave the jokes to the cynics. In Iowa, Jimmy Carter—always *Jimmy* Carter, never *James*—was playing beautifully. He was just the sort of antipolitician in whom people clearly longed to believe. The reasons seemed far more spiritual than political—and were revealed far better by the dreamscape of popular culture than by the mundane world of polls or public policy.

There was a curious little movie that came out the previous summer, the summer of *Jaws*, which cineasts adored but the public avoided. Brilliant, yes, but difficult: a sort of scattered, discursive allegory for a national mood buried a bit too far beneath the surface of the national consciousness to make it a simple thing to explain. The picture, called *Nashville*, was directed by Robert Altman. It began with the perambulations of a sound truck for presidential candidate Hal Philip Walker, blaring aphorisms, folksy but vague:

"I'm often confronted with the statement, 'I don't want to get mixed up in politics. . . . I can't do anything about it anyway.' We *can* do something about it" —

(In the background, a billboard reading "The Bank," dilapidated, like American capitalism itself.)

"When you pay more for an automobile than it cost Columbus to take his entire voyage to the New World" —

And from there, a random, unmotivated cut to an apparently entirely unrelated scene—Altman's method throughout the whole film. A country star named Haven Hamilton (a haven and a Founding Father) is recording a soppy Bicentennial anthem, somehow simultaneously

brashly jingoistic and apologetic—more or less like the nation it was celebrating, these days: "We must be doing something right to last two hundred years."

Cue melodramatic timpani roll.

A pretty female BBC reporter is on the scene, kicked out of the studio, finding her way to another in which a white singer played by Lily Tomlin is recording a song with a black gospel choir. Cut back to Haven Hamilton, berating a hippie musician for his long hair. Another country star, Barbara Jean, receives a hero's welcome at the Nashville airport. The sound truck happens by: "*When the government begins to ask the citizens to swallow the camel, it's time to do some accounting.*" Comes a hip young stud on a Harley-Davidson, played by Jeff Goldblum. A drill team in blue sequins and batons. A waifish hippie, played by Shelley Duvall. A rock band. A soldier. (He's asked, "Did you kill anybody this week?") A black man. A good ol' boy campaign manager.

"Congress is run by lawyers . . . and you wonder what's wrong with Congress."

"I don't vote for anybody for president."

A huge pileup on the expressway, all these random, unrelated people suddenly thrown together in the same space, the same situation, wandering randomly, wandering like the pilgrims in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* or the animals leaving Noah's Ark, but wandering toward which destination, or surviving what flood, it was never made clear. A mysterious man with a violin case, popping up in scene after scene. A bluegrass band playing at a bar; a John F. Kennedy poster, people waving a Confederate flag. A song floated throughout the soundtrack: "*It don't worry me. . .*"

In a voice-over, the real-life newsman Howard K. Smith narrates Hal Philip Walker's unlikely story. He gave a commencement address that made him a national sensation—with bromides like "Have you stood on a high and windy hill and heard the acorns drop and roll? Have you walked along the valley beside the brook, walked alone and remembered? Does Christmas smell like oranges to you?"—then won three presidential primaries in a row, and was about to win a fourth, here in Tennessee.

Two and a half hours pass onscreen. This motley assemblage unites once more, apparently by chance, at a rally for Walker at the curious replica of the Greek Parthenon that Nashville ("the Athens of the South") built for the 1897 World's Fair: the red-white-and-blue bunting everywhere, the brass bands, the glad-handers, patriotic songs, masses of security men looking around nervously—and the man with the violin case. The viewer knows how this ends. A flag ripples. Shots ring out.

Haven Hamilton takes control: "Y'all take it easy now. This isn't Dallas, it's Nashville. They can't do this to us here in Nashville! Let's show them what we're made of. Come on, everybody, sing! Somebody, sing!" And they, all of them, gospel choir, rock band, country band, sing: "*It don't worry me. . .*" The camera pulls back to take in the entire scene, a rippling flag, a Walker for President sign, then up to the heavens, longingly.

Nashville: you could pick through the various runes and try to make them signify something coherent, but the incoherence felt like the point—but an incoherence, be that as it is may, that is *shared*. That somehow ends with this shambling, variegated community redeemed, as one. Like a nation—our nation, our confused, ambivalent, longing nation, looking for meaning in the Bicentennial year, looking for meaning, finding none, but insisting on meaning nonetheless. *All in it together.*

And maybe that redemption could come from the old bloody South: Sam Ervin's South, Howard Baker's South—the South of the men who redeemed the nation from the wicked Nixon.

The presidential candidate was never pictured. What he looked like was entirely left to the viewer's imagination. Nor was his proposed "replacement," what it actually might consist of in practical political terms, ever described. Both were left as absences—voids into which voters could project their very desire.

Maybe he looked like James Earl Carter.

HE WAS BORN IN A TOWN OF 550 SOULS, PLAINS, GEORGIA, IN 1924, A FEW miles south of the cemetery that housed the first Carter to settle those parts, born in 1798. "My life on the farm during the Great Depression more nearly resembled farm life of fully 2,000 years ago than farm life today," his campaign memoir proclaimed: bricks heated on a fire to keep people warm at night and only the breezes to keep them cool; an outdoor privy and a hand pump for water, heated on the woodstove when it came time for the luxury of a warm bath; hand-cranked clippers to cut the hair of both humans and mules. An extraordinary, demanding, hardworking, conservative, civic-minded father—first director of the local Rural Electrification Administration office, when "Jimmy" turned thirteen; an extraordinarily brave, independent-minded mother, a nurse (actually more of a community doctor) who defiantly insisted on treating black people the same way she treated whites and was famous or infamous as the most liberal woman in the county.

The farm was the center of a civilization—"Mr. Earl's" civilization. Crops to grow, harvest, and market; livestock to raise—but also meat

to cure, sugar to grind into juice and boil into syrup, timber to hew, lard to render. There was a blacksmith shop; a tannery; a general store with staples and products of the Carters' own manufacture: stuffed sausage, sweet milk separated into its component parts, butter, pickled pig's feet, wool blankets. The store was the lifeline for the twenty-five black families whose wage labor drove the machine, and who had a little village of their own, called Archery, with their own African Methodist Episcopal church, and whose children played on terms of equality alongside Jimmy and his brother Billy and sisters Gloria and Ruth—except for certain social conventions that had to be hewed to, and never questioned. ("We never went to the same church or school. . . . We did not sit together on the two-car diesel train that could be flagged down in Archery.") They all worked together on terms of equality, too, starting at 4 A.M., when the whole community was awoken by the clang of the bell. The mules had to be rounded up by lantern light; "cotton had to be picked by hand; peanuts were pulled out from the ground, the dirt shaken off them, and then stacked on poles to dry; the whole round of work that lasted until sundown. Later in the year the corn leaves were pulled, the fodder tied into little bundles and stuck on top of the corn stalk to dry." Autumn meant harvesting corn and velvet beans ("the stinging fuzz made this one of the most difficult of all farm jobs"). Winter meant slaughtering hogs and cutting cane and felling and stacking timber—"and then the annual cycle would repeat itself." But he still had enough energy, starting when he was but five years old, to regularly walk two miles down the railroad tracks to sell boiled peanuts on his own in the streets of Plains. Twice a year, a medicine show came to visit, but that's not where he spent his newfound riches. The boy his father nicknamed "Hotshot" bought five bales of cotton when he was nine years old and kept it in his father's storehouses until the price rose from five to eighteen cents; out of the proceeds he bought five houses and collected \$16.50 a month from the tenants in rent until he left home for the U.S. Naval Academy. (He'd been so ambitious to go to school in Annapolis that he'd rolled his feet on Coca-Cola bottles for hours every week when he read that flat arches disqualified applicants.)

Perhaps it was the intricate, self-sufficient complexity of this miniature world into which his father initiated him that gave Carter his preternatural confidence. It had been more than three years earlier when he told his mother he intended to run for president. "President of what?" she earnestly responded.

She was not alone. "Jimmy who?" was the question in Washington; the first time Carter traveled to Iowa the only people who showed up

for a reception scheduled at a Des Moines hotel were the candidate, his longtime press secretary Jody Powell, their local organizer—and just three Iowans. They had ordered enough food to serve two hundred. At least, Carter later joked to journalist Martin Schram, the embarrassment was easy to contain: "There weren't any newspeople there to cover the event." Although it had to be said that this was in February 1975—far earlier than any other candidate had bothered to campaign in Iowa before, even George McGovern, who also had made it his strategy to try to get the press to report "surprise" strong showings in Iowa and New Hampshire as momentum to catapult him into later contests.

Carter had, by then, a national profile of sorts, at least among political junkies. The day after his failed bid for the Democratic nomination for governor in 1966 he announced his campaign for 1970, exhibiting the indefatigable energy for which he would become known. He claimed to have made approximately 1.5 speeches per day in the intervening four years and to have shaken six hundred thousand hands, or half the voting population of Georgia. He prevailed; his January 1971 inaugural speech—"I say to you quite frankly the time for racial discrimination is over"—got his face on the May 31, 1971, cover of *Time* ("Dixie Whistles a Different Tune"). In his campaign book he wrote with surprising frankness about his experience, as a mere second-year governor, of meeting the 1972 Democratic presidential prospects, and Nelson Rockefeller, and Richard Nixon, and Spiro Agnew. He wasn't impressed. He began "to realize that the president is just a human being. . . . I lost my feeling of awe about presidents." That summer he joined the movement to stop George McGovern, and delivered a nominating speech for Scoop Jackson at the convention; that November, his aide and confidant Hamilton Jordan wrote a ninety-page strategy memo on how he might become president, and another aide moved to Washington, D.C., to open a Carter beachhead. Carter traveled to Latin America, then Europe and Israel, and joined David Rockefeller's Trilateral Commission, a sort of study club for the internationalist foreign policy elite, mingling with the likes of cofounder Zbigniew Brzezinski, a foreign policy mandarin under Kennedy and Johnson with whom he established a rapport. He started showing up in the news, picking fights with Richard Nixon (Nixon was "conspiring with major oil companies to increase bottle gas prices by as much as 410 percent"). And he began hogging the TV networks' cameras so adamantly—he made himself conspicuously present at every milestone in Hank Aaron's home-run chase, and even made a cameo on the game show *What's My Line* (no one knew who he was)—that a Nixon-loving letter writer to the *Atlanta Constitution* referred

to him as "the carping-peanut-brain self-serving public image builder, Jimmy Carter."

And, while doing so, he was folksy. Always, he was folksy.

He hit the road for the DNC as chairman of its congressional campaign effort in 1974. "It scared us in the beginning, not being from Washington," the staffer he traveled with that year later related to Richard Reeves, in one of the many where-did-Jimmy-Carter-come-from profiles that began appearing week in and week out. "But in most of the campaigns we concentrated on, we were dealing with non-incumbents, and almost all of them benefitted from being able to joke about Washington or take some licks against what was happening there"—and Carter's staffers were among the first to realize that Watergate might make it an *advantage* not to be an incumbent, for the first time in political history.

Just to make sure, though, they commissioned a poll. Its central question was "People say a member of Congress should be preferred as a presidential candidate because of broad foreign policy experience. Others say a governor should be preferred because of experience running things. Which make sense to you?" "Governor" won, by a ratio of three to two. Carter began, too, his practice of staying in ordinary citizens' homes; the Carter camp didn't know anyone else and was on a shoestring. But necessity soon became a virtue: it was folksy, and useful for establishing a national network of volunteers. Ted Sorensen, who had been JFK's speechwriter and was now a Carter supporter, pointed out: "How can you vote against someone that slept on your couch?"

The notion of a savior from Dixie was in the political air, too—especially one without the racist baggage of George Corley Wallace. The Democrats' first "mini-convention" in November 1974, in Kansas City (where, in keeping with the nation's new longing for nostalgic innocence, the delegates made constant pilgrimages to the Harry Truman Library), was noisy with Southern drawls trying to affect a presidential air: Lloyd Bentsen of Texas, Dale Bumpers of Arkansas, Terry Sanford of North Carolina, George Wallace, Robert Byrd.

But only one of them, who had officially announced his presidential campaign way back in December 1974, was already establishing his beachhead in Iowa.

The standard tactic was to persuade the biggest name you could find to head your statewide organizations. But this was impossible when your national name recognition was only 2 percent. Virtue of necessity: having any well-known figurehead would only pigeonhole the candidate with the ideology of that person. So Carter's staff put together

a twenty-member "Iowa Carter for President Steering Committee" instead, a geographical and ideological smorgasbord—which automatically granted them twenty well-dispersed field offices. It also provided a plethora of local knowledge—for instance, that Democrats in the Sioux City area might appreciate the gesture, for his campaign's opening banquet, of honoring a nearly blind old woman named Marie Jahn, who thirty-eight years earlier had become the first female officeholder in the state, in her little town of Le Mars, population 8,895. The event, on February 26, 1975, was the first of Carter's unprecedented twenty-one campaign visits to the state—the first of many times perhaps (for the event was too far below the radar for any record of it to have been preserved) in which he drawled winsomely that, since his assets were already listed in his campaign literature, he would instead note his liabilities:

"I'm not a lawyer." (A good laugh line.)

"I'm not from Washington." (That one was even better.)

"I'm not a member of Congress." (Bull's-eye.)

"I've never been part of the national government." That line, a reporter, said "drew so much laughter that he couldn't continue."

The post-Watergate riffs came easily, a product of biography. There was his first run for elected office, for state senator, in 1962, as an independent against a corrupt courthouse machine. The fraud against him was blatant and extravagant: votes by dead men recorded; entire precincts that supposedly voted in alphabetical order; stuffed—overstuffed—ballot boxes. (One district of 333 voters recorded 431 votes; voters who watched their ballots torn up in front of them were threatened with death should they report what they saw.) The review board ruling upon his challenge did not even hear witnesses. With no small courage, Carter appealed. He won. His longing for political service was like something evangelical. (When his pastor asked him why in the world he wanted to enter a profession so sordid as politics, he retorted, "How would you like to be the pastor of a church with eighty thousand members?") The gospel of good government would be his ministry: he was the only legislator to read every bill, and his proudest accomplishments as governor (he spoke of these as if he'd cured a dread disease) were technocratic feats like reducing the number of state departments and agencies from three hundred to twenty and, he said, cutting administrative costs in half.

A technocrat, yes, but one who got to the statehouse telling stories like a populist: "My chief opponent"—Carl Sanders, a pillar of the Georgia political establishment whom his campaign labeled "Cufflink Carl"—"got almost all the endorsements," Carter later recollected. "We

made an issue of the big shots standing between him and the people, and eventually almost every endorsement (which he avidly sought) cost him votes in some fashion or another."

His presidential campaign autobiography, *Why Not the Best*, was published by a Christian press. (On the back cover: "Other Inspiration, Compiled by Bill Stephens. True stories of people who have encountered God.") He liked to quote a line from a favorite sermon: "If you were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?" He also liked to dwell on a word that almost never appeared in political speeches: *love*. How we needed "to bind our people together in political harmony and love one another." How federal employees should begin each workweek with "their hearts full of love." How we needed a government "as filled with love as are the American people." His Iowa state chair, Tom Whitney, related how he chose this dark horse: "we spent two hours talking about Christ. For a moment we shared a concept and a thought process that we both believe is a fundamental need in our society. Which was the concept of love—love thy neighbor. We explored the 'I am Third' process in which God is first, family and friends second, and I am third. This nation needs a totally loving president."

Carter made personal contact his campaign's fetish. Driving between Ames, Iowa, and Marshalltown, he happened upon a farm. He stopped. The proprietor, named Fred McClain, was not home. Carter took a piece of campaign stationery, wrote out a note, and stuck it in the front door: he was sorry he had missed him. And Mr. McClain had a "beautiful farm." It was signed, "Jimmy."

A physics professor at Iowa State, Charles Hammer, a Democratic chairman for his congressional district who had worked for the antiwar liberals Eugene McCarthy and George McGovern, had been impressed watching "Jimmy" field tough questions at a town meeting. He got a call: "This is Jimmy Carter. I'd like you to be on the state campaign committee." Hammer said he would have to think about it. The governor gave the professor a phone number, a date, and a time to call him back. The professor called him at the appointed time to announce he'd decided to take him up on the offer. He expected a campaign office on the other end of the line, but Mrs. Carter answered the phone instead. At their Plains, Georgia, home. He was shocked, though not as shocked as when Rosalynn Carter said, "Hello, Charles. How's Hazel"—his wife. And that "Rosalynn"—first names only—had recalled Hazel telling her she had a brother in Michigan, and asked for her brother's address so Jimmy could write him a note. "He always sent handwritten

notes," another Carter watcher marveled. "He wrote them to anyone. He'd get all the names at the meeting and he'd go to Powell, who usually followed his boss around, noting names and addresses of people Carter met at gatherings. And he'd write them."

In the normal course of modern politics, in a time when more and more politicians sold themselves via the cold, impersonal media of direct mail and TV, this stuff was about as strange as est. But it worked: not, of course, merely on the objects of this unusual attention, but on the reporters who wrote about how it was unprecedented.

There was an annual Jefferson-Jackson fund-raising dinner in Des Moines, held in October, attended by thousands of Iowa Democrats. "We figured," Jody Powell later recollected, "that somebody'd take a straw poll or something like that." And indeed, the *Des Moines Register* did, though no campaign had ever thought to make anything out of it before. The Carter machine, though, already humming, decided to make this a test of its organization. The other candidates showed up, caring only to polish their after-dinner speeches. Only Carter showed up with an entire armada. In the parking lot volunteers did "visibility" work, chanting and singing Carter songs, holding up Carter signs. Inside his steering committee worked the aisles like convention floor whips. Their candidate got 23 percent of the votes; Hubert Humphrey was second, but with only 12 percent; Bayh was third with 10; other supposedly marquee candidates—Sargent Shriver; Congressman Morris "Mo" Udall of Arizona; Fred Harris, a former liberal senator from Oklahoma who had served as chairman of the Democratic Committee—brought up the rear. Jody Powell, meanwhile, had casually tipped off reporters: "the *Register* had a poll that was worth looking at." The *New York Times* bit—and ran the following headline the next morning: "CARTER APPEARS TO HOLD A SOLID LEAD IN IOWA AS THE CAMPAIGN'S FIRST TEST APPROACHES." Birch Bayh had finally entered the race only three days earlier; George Wallace would not enter for another two weeks. "Sometimes," an aide told a reporter just around them, "I think we're the only people trying to win this nomination."

Seven weeks later Carter was profiled in the *New York Times Magazine*—"Peanut Farmer for President." The article was packaged on the cover with a drawing of Carter as a country boy in straw hat and overalls, and inside, with a portrait of the candidate as a smiling seven-year-old boy, another of him playing barefoot, a steely one of him as an Annapolis midshipman, and one captioned, "Peanut farmer, 1975" (he wasn't really a peanut farmer; he owned a peanut warehousing business). The writer was a novelist named Patrick Anderson, who had

ghostwritten Jeb Magruder's new memoir, *An American Life*. He had asked to profile Carter after the editors had proposed to him Daniel Patrick Moynihan or Nelson Rockefeller. He described the Georgian as "a soft-spoken, thoughtful, likable man, an introspective man who enjoys the songs of Bob Dylan, the poems of Dylan Thomas, and the writing of James Agee, William Faulkner, John McPhee, and Reinhold Niebuhr, and who 'stubbornly defied segregation in his hometown of Plains.'"

The piece was reported out of Florida, another key early state where Carter's organizing had been early and intense. Anderson followed him pressing flesh at a resort town, charming locals with a joke at President Ford's expense that reporters could soon recite by heart, about how he would respond when asked how he would feel if his daughter had a premarital affair: "I told him that Mrs. Carter and I would be deeply hurt and shocked and disappointed . . . because our daughter is only seven years old." Anderson went on to puff Carter as a kind of ideological Superman: a get-tough conservative (pledging "all-out economic" war in the event of another oil embargo before he would let America be "brought to her knees again"), a compassionate liberal, and an organizational genius, who, forced to agree not to fire any employees to get his reorganization bill passed, still managed to reduce the state's payroll "from an annual increase of 14 to 2 percent."

Most of all, he depicted a soothing counterimage to the dreaded George C. Wallace, that toxic perennial of presidential campaign seasons going back all the way to 1964. Wallace's moment in the national spotlight began the same year Carter entered the Georgia state legislature, when Wallace proclaimed in his 1963 inaugural address, "segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever," then "stood in the schoolhouse door" to keep the University of Alabama from being integrated. Each of the three times he subsequently ran for president he softened his image more; however, each time that only terrified liberals some more: maybe this was the year he'd prove palatable enough to the masses to win, and the demonic energies released in places like South Boston and Kanawha County, West Virginia, would ride roughshod over the nation. Wallace entered this year's race on Veterans Day, November 11. He was making his biggest stand in Florida. And it was in Florida, the *New York Times Magazine* reported, that Carter handled a "tanned, ponytailed, fortyish, and mad as hell" woman at a campaign event with near-heroic aplomb. "What are you gonna do about those welfare cases who don't want to work?" she demanded. "The ones who've already bankrupted New York City and Detroit and Washington, D.C.?"

"I'm glad you asked that," said Carter, the very soul of reason. "I

think the first thing we have to do is to separate those who can work from those who can't."

"They don't want to work," the lady protested. "I've talked to people on welfare who enjoy it!"

"Well, the statistics show that only about 10 percent of the people on welfare are able to work," Carter said. "The rest are children or mothers or handicapped or . . ."

"I don't believe that," the blonde cried.

"Well, perhaps you'd better believe your statistics and I'll believe mine," Carter said, and began to outline his finely canted position on welfare, which was that the system should be simplified, that some sort of national minimum income should be provided, that able-bodied recipients should be offered training jobs—and be denied benefits if they refuse a job—and that those welfare recipients who can't work should be treated with compassion and respect.

"But they don't want to work!" the blonde persisted, as people began to shush her and mutter that she was drunk. Carter patiently soldiered on, reasonably, liberally—but, somehow, also conservatively, too. He spoke both of his compassion for those on welfare, and of his insistence on putting them to work, for example in one of 136 day-care centers for the mentally retarded that were staffed by welfare mothers. Anderson, the *Times* reporter: "Down at my end of the bar, I scribbled in my notebook: 'Good—stubborn—stuck to his guns.' But at the same time I was wondering if any man could hope to defeat George Wallace in Florida advocating 'compassion and respect' for welfare recipients."

Anderson clearly hoped Carter would defeat Wallace. He went on to describe Carter's other heroic acts of racial reconciliation: his repeated stands for racial integration in Plains, even upon pain of a boycott of his business; his insistence on running in 1970 as a "pro-civil rights" candidate (though Anderson noted that "many conservatives seemingly chose to disbelieve him, or to see him as a lesser evil to the known 'liberalism' of Sanders"). Anderson later noted that some among "the Eastern liberals for whom reading the Sunday *New York Times* is a religious experience" told him that it was his article that turned them on to Carter.

The article went on, eloquently, about the soul of the Southerner's "Replacement Party"—style appeal: "Carter's pitch is more idealistic than ideological. He says that America is drifting, that people are ashamed of their government, and that all he wants is to see America with a government 'as idealistic, as decent, as competent, as compassionate, as good as its people.' He closes almost every speech by saying earnestly that he would never tell a lie or duck an issue just to be president—a piety that

makes some journalists groan aloud, but that apparently impresses many listeners."

One of those impressed listeners, it turned out, was the reporter, Patrick Anderson, who soon joined the Carter campaign as a speechwriter.

Another Carter panegyric, in what one of Carter's anguished competitors, Mo Udall, called the "incredible flow of press starting with that silly poll in Iowa," appeared on January 16 on page A1 of the *Washington Post*. It introduced the political class to some members of his homespun family: his mother, Lillian, "a remarkable woman of broad interests who went to India as a Peace Corps volunteer nurse 10 years ago, at age 67"; his steely wife, Rosalynn, daughter of a mechanic father and a mother who still worked at the post office, and who some said wanted the presidency worse than he did.

But the *Post* also dwelled on that preternatural confidence. It reported him working for zoning laws in Plains to control commercial development and souvenir sales for "when I am president," his conversations with reporters about "my inaugural address," and programs planned for "the first year of my administration." It noted, too, a certain contempt for the very calling he had chosen for his lifework. It quoted one of his former supporters in the state legislature: "Jimmy never learned the three guiding rules of politics—reward your friends, punish your enemies, and then make up with your enemies." Another critic, who insisted on anonymity, called him abrasive, unfeeling, ruthless—"and totally egocentric." And another: "Politicians don't like him because he doesn't like them."

Ah, but that was the point: all the usual résumé lines that boosted candidates in every previous campaign in history—experienced, connections, institutionally savvy—could only hurt you in the first presidential election after Watergate.

An interviewer asked Carter how he had hit on these themes, so unusual for a presidential campaign in any other year: trust, integrity, openness, love. He replied, "All Democratic candidates—congressional, governors—have available to us polls showing broad thematic studies. The polls showed us the post-Vietnam feeling, the feeling of exclusion, the embarrassment at lower ethical standards, at Washington. Those were available."

This was an interesting answer. It spoke to the man's arrogance: *everyone had access to this information, but I was the only one with the wit to listen*. The candid moment also revealed a snag in the very story line: what does sincerity mean if it is chosen as deliberate strategy?

And besides, the other candidates *had* listened to such poll messages.

It was the zeitgeist; how could they avoid it? There was Birch Bayh's "moral leadership" pledge (and a biographical film in which he sifted a lump of dirt: "I come off a farm in a little place called Shirkieville..."). There was George Wallace, whose entire national political appeal had always been built on projecting a homespun, anti-Washington image. When Frank Church finally got his candidacy on line he featured slogans like "For Old-Fashioned Honesty: Church for President," and "In 1976 vote for the man who saved us from 1984." Fred Harris, a former liberal senator from Oklahoma who had served as chairman of the Democratic National Committee, would apologize to crowds for having been "part of the mess"—and told friends, "I spent five lousy years kissing their asses in Washington before I figured out it didn't mean anything." Mo Udall foregrounded his upbringing in a town with but ninety-three souls, and his campaign materials pushed his "integrity"—so much so that at a fortnightly on-the-record breakfast for Washington bureau chiefs, columnists, and reporters one of them asked, "Are you prick enough to be president?" The eight-term congressman, whose memoir was titled *Too Funny to Be President*, responded with a joke whose punch line involved the candidate riding a horse in a parade. The owner insisted it was a mare but the politician said it must be a stallion: "I can distinctly remember riding through the streets and hearing people say, look at the prick on that big white horse."

Political pricks on big white horses were in such bad odor in 1976 that, as one political handicapper put it, "this year, negatives are positives." And for now, Jimmy Carter was playing that game the best of them all. The thirty-five thousand Democratic activists raised their hands in their precinct caucuses on January 19, the same day that Gerald Ford delivered his second State of the Union address. "Uncommitted" won: who wanted to commit to a *politician*? But among those willing to stake themselves on one, it was James Earl Carter who prevailed. The next morning he was featured on the *Today* show, the *CBS Morning News*, and *Good Morning America*. That night, Walter Cronkite said Iowans had spoken, "and for the Democrats, what they said was Jimmy Carter."

Yet how much that could possibly mean for the long haul was up in the air. When William Safire ran his New Year's Day "1976 Office Pool" column, question three read, "The Democratic ticket will be (a) Jackson-Brown (b) Bayh-Carey (c) Humphrey-Carter (d) Kennedy-Bentsen"—four senators being almost the only choices on offer. Antipolitics sounded all well and good. But how could someone running against Washington win the support it took among the powerful to get to Washington?

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

"Not the Candidate of Kooks"

TWELVE MONTHS EARLIER, THE PRESIDENT ORATED BEFORE THE JOINT session of Congress, "The state of the union is not good." Indubitably, that still was the case. But this was an election year. And the Bicentennial year. Surely different rhetoric was called for. And so in this year's State of the Union speech it arrived: "In man's long, upward march from savagery and slavery, throughout the nearly 2,000 years of the Christian calendar, the nearly 6,000 years of Jewish reckoning, there have been many deep, terrifying valleys," but also one example that "shines forth of a people uniting to produce abundance and to share the good life fairly and with freedom. One union holds out the promise of justice and opportunity for every citizen. That union is the United States of America."

He said, "In the recent past," Americans "sometimes forgot the sound principles that guided us throughout our history. . . . We thought we could transform the country through massive national programs. . . . Too often they only made things worse." And so he proposed transferring \$10 billion from the federal government down to the states so they could take more control of administering the Medicaid program themselves; matching every dollar in slowed growth in the federal budget with a dollar in tax cuts; a tightening of welfare eligibility and "long-overdue reform of the scandal-riddled food stamp program"; more funds for federal prisons and longer sentences for drug offenders; a defense budget increase; a cap on the pay for federal workers. He proposed a bill for catastrophic health coverage for seniors but said we "cannot realistically afford federally dictated national health insurance." The controlling trope was "common sense," and "new realism" was the headline phrase.

He was fighting for his political life against Ronald Reagan. More and more, he sounded like Ronald Reagan.

And in New Hampshire, his campaign strategists had arrived at a

deviously brilliant strategy: that Reagan the antitax crusader was going to raise their taxes.

New Hampshire was a haven of antitax absolutists. It had no state income tax and no state sales tax—and all gubernatorial candidates had to sign a pledge never to propose if they wanted to live to see another political day. That was courtesy of William Loeb, publisher of the only newspaper with a statewide reach, the *Manchester Union-Leader*, a Reagan booster and passionate foe of the man he called in his front-page editorials "Jerry the Jerk."

Reagan had spent December at his ranch, resting and, his campaign staff said, "studying the issues." He arrived in the Granite State on January 2 with a clever gimmick borrowed from Richard Nixon's campaign in 1968: "citizens' press conferences," which let ordinary voters question the candidate, thus giving the appearance of post-Watergate transparency, while at the same time excluding experienced reporters from pressing him, thus actually limiting it. Handicappers were giving Reagan an edge to win the February 24 primary in the most conservative state in the union outside the South. The citizens, however, did not cooperate—once the Ford staffers sprang their clever trap.

It came of Reagan's ignored speech to the Chicago Executives Club back in September, in which he argued that "a systematic transfer of authority and resources to the states" would save the federal government \$90 billion. Campaign chiefs Bo Callaway and Stuart Spencer circulated a memo to reporters pointing out that for states to administer such programs they'd need to fund such administration, too. The memo included a column criticizing the speech by, of all people, Pat Buchanan. And it laid out back-of-the-envelope calculations that in a place like New Hampshire this would require \$13 million in new revenue—and itemized how many libraries, fire trucks, sidewalks, and police equipment would have to be scrapped to raise the funds. Barring, of course—as Spencer said in a press conference in the state capital just prior to the landing of Reagan's chartered 727—"the specter of new and higher taxes as the price of Reagan's folly." Soon that was all anyone in New Hampshire wanted to discuss.

"The people of New Hampshire, I understand, are worried that I have some devious plot to impose the sales or income tax on them," Reagan immediately was forced to respond before the Moultonborough, New Hampshire, Lions Club. "Believe me, I have no such intention and I don't think there is any danger that New Hampshire is getting one." Lyn Nofziger said, "We're not backing away from the concept at all."

We think this is a good Republican approach." Another key spokesman, Governor Meldrim Thomson, promptly contradicted that: "I think that's probably a program which he will be thinking of taking a second thought on."

The Associated Press: "In three days of campaigning in New Hampshire... Reagan was bombarded at each stop with questions on his plan to cut the federal budget by turning over responsibility for most federal welfare and social service programs to the states... Reagan has avoided saying specifically how the states would be expected to fund the programs." An editorial from the *Nashua Telegraph*: "The man who wants Republicans in New Hampshire to turn their backs on President Ford ought to answer specifically the welter of questions his \$90 billion panacea has provoked... [A] scheme that would require Congress to rewrite or undo 40 years of laws and that would require each of the state governments to cope with the trauma of writing new laws and enacting new or increased taxes... never will be simple—10,000 press agents shouting to the contrary notwithstanding." They pointed to his promise that nothing in the plan required new state taxes, and savaged his campaign's signature gimmick. "Since Mr. Reagan is protected in his 'citizen press conferences' from follow-up questions, that supposedly settles that. That settles nothing. We don't give a hoot about Mr. Reagan's sweet intentions; we want to know about the bitter consequences of his scheme." Bo Callaway got a nice pop in the media saying Reagan wanted to "throw old people in the snow"; Mary McGrory pivoted off that to write, "It could be that the people of New Hampshire are as flinty as their reputation and would endorse the idea of throwing old people out in the snow and be glad that Ronald Reagan had made cold-heartedness respectable." And so at that, after eleven days of floundering that resulted in the national press deploying Reagan's words to insult the electorate of New Hampshire itself, he took it all back: "I guess I made a mistake in the speech I made in Chicago last September," he said in Illinois, which was voting next after Florida, and claimed he had devised a technical fix that preserved the heart of the proposal while cushioning states from the financial consequences; how it would do this, though, he could not quite explain. At that his Illinois communications director reversed the reversal and said, "I think he's sorry he ever alluded to the \$90 billion figure at all."

Disarray: precisely why this attack was so clever. It neutralized Reagan's biggest strength—his reputation as a tax cutter—and engaged his biggest weakness: explaining complicated ideas on the fly, setting up a story line that Reagan was lazy and stupid and couldn't lead without

guidance from unseen hands. A poll of Republican state chairmen found 90 percent of the respondents worried about the "Reagan problem," that he had "simplistic approaches," "no depth in federal government administration," and "no experience in foreign affairs."

THE REAGAN CAMPAIGN WAS A CHICKEN WITH ITS HEAD CUT OFF, BUT Ford had problems of his own. He had won the conservative New Hampshire senator Norris Cotton to his side, a Pyrrhic victory: Cotton told the press that he preferred Reagan's ideology, and that Ford had "a bad organization." A Supreme Court decision validated California's unique "winner-take-all" primary system, which meant whichever candidate won 51 percent or more when the Golden State voted in June—Ronald Reagan, almost certainly—would harvest 167 delegates out of the 1,130 needed to nominate. On January 24 the columnist George Will reported that Mac Mathias, "a member of the GOP's embattled Corregidor Garrison of liberals," bored with "what he calls 'the Ford-Reagan monologue,'" was still thinking of making the race. President Ford swooped down upon New Hampshire in Air Force One to dazzle the locals, but, as Reagan's twenty-eight-year-old campaign aide David Keene observed to a reporter, kidding on the square, "Every time Ford flies out for another speech, we gain two percent in the polls."

Then there was the headache of managing the foreign policy of a global power during a political campaign, a damned-if-he-did-damned-if-he-didn't conundrum if there ever was one.

On January 15 it was announced that Henry Kissinger would soon jet off to Moscow to resume the next Strategic Arms Limitation Talks ("SALT II"), one week after the Harris poll found that Americans, by 44 to 25 percent, preferred Reagan's hard line on the Soviets over détente, and nine days before Evans and Novak commented that the new, conservative secretary of defense, Donald Rumsfeld, still had enough muscle with the White House to kill SALT II altogether. "We must not face a future in which we can no longer help our friends, such as Angola, even in limited and carefully controlled ways," Ford had said in the State of the Union address, something executives in less suspicious times, when presidents managed foreign policy on their own, would never need mention. But now Congress was debating whether to permanently kill aid to the MPLA, our faction in the African nation's civil war. Kissinger told Ford, "We're living in a nihilistic nightmare."

Another thing Ford made sure to touch upon in his State of the Union address was "[t]he crippling of our foreign intelligence services,"

which he claimed "increases the danger of American involvement in direct armed conflict. Our adversaries are encouraged to attempt new adventures . . . the United States stands blindfolded and hobbled."

In case rhetoric wasn't enough to do the trick, nor the public ceremonies surrounding the death of the CIA's Richard Welch, the day after the State of the Union message, and two days after the *Times*' article "Revamping the CIA: Easier Said Than Done," another opportunity presented itself to discredit Congress's intelligence investigations and hobble serious CIA reform once and for all. Daniel Schorr of CBS began reporting choice bits from a leaked copy of the final report of Otis Pike's House Select Committee on Intelligence, which report was scheduled for publication at the end of January. So did the *New York Times*: stuff like how an Italian neofascist general got paid \$800,000 for services rendered to the CIA, stuff which had nothing to do with violating national security but everything to do with exposing agency incompetence and immorality. Be that as it may. Following so close on Philip Agee's call to oust CIA agents and the death of Richard Welch, the very fact of "unauthorized leaks" provided the opening. Ron Nessen said they raised "serious questions about how classified material can be handled by Congress when national security is at stake." The CIA said genial, bow-tied Otis Pike might soon be responsible for the blood of more dead CIA agents. An intimidated liberal Democratic congressman begged Pike to find out who had passed on copies to the press. Pike replied, "What do you recommend, precisely? Lie detector tests to members of Congress?"

Maybe. The report, drafted by an Ervin Committee veteran, was, for a government document, a literary masterpiece, and hard-hitting as hell. It opened with seventy pages savaging the Ford administration's lack of cooperation with Congress's work, and continued, more aggressively than Pike's public hearings—which had been plenty aggressive themselves, far more so than Senator Church's—by documenting the CIA's wasteful spending (where it could figure out *what* it spent), its bald failures at prediction, its abuses of civil liberties, and its blanket indifference that any of this might pose a problem. The report singled out Henry Kissinger for his "passion for secrecy" and statements "at variance with facts"; it detailed a number of failed covert actions—not naming countries, but with plenty of identifying details to make things obvious enough for those who cared to infer. For instance, how the Nixon administration encouraged the Kurdish minority in Iraq to revolt, then abandoned these Kurds when the shah of Iran objected. "Even in the context of covert action," it concluded concerning *that* one, "ours was a cynical exercise."

And something about all this seemed to spook cowed congressmen—who soon were voting to neuter themselves.

The House Rules Committee approved, by nine votes to seven, a measure to suppress publication of the report unless President Ford approved its contents. The full House debated whether to accept or reject the recommendation. Those against argued that the "classification" system itself violated the canons of checks and balances that were supposed to be the foundation of the republic. A moderate Republican from Colorado pointed out that the executive branch was desperate to serve as judge and jury in the very case in which it was the plaintiff. The report definitively established that the CIA had committed "despicable, detestable acts," but "we are being castigated by those who perpetrate the acts and classify them." Pike made a demystifying point: that each of these things called "secrets," hemmed around with such sacralizing foofaraw and talked about as if they were blatant instructions to our enemies on how to defeat us, "is a fact or opinion to which some bureaucrat has applied a rubber stamp." A Democrat from suburban Chicago drove home the bottom line: "If we are not a coequal branch of this government, if we are not equal to the President and the Supreme Court, then let the CIA write this report; let the President write this report; and we ought to fold our tent and go home."

To no avail. On January 29, the full House, led by conservatives, voted by a ratio of two to one to suppress the very report it had authorized and which took a year of work and several hundred thousand dollars to produce.

It all was too much for Daniel Schorr. He took his copy to his bosses at CBS: "We owe it to history to publish it," he said. They disagreed. He went to a nonprofit organization called the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press to see if it could find a publishing house that might be interested, with the proceeds perhaps going to its group. It could not. Finally the alternative weekly the *Village Voice* agreed to publish the report, in a massive special issue, and since the Reporters Committee now controlled the document, the *Voice* made a contribution to the group. This set off a fierce backlash among the polite guardians of journalistic decorum; the *New York Times* editorialized that by "making the report available for cash," Daniel Schorr was guilty of "selling secrets." On ABC, anchor Sam Donaldson said, "There are those that argue that in an open society like ours nothing should be concealed from the public. Depending on who espouses it, that position is either cynical, or naive." He said "mature and rational citizens" understood this—but not, apparently, Daniel Schorr. Nor Schorr's bosses

at CBS News, who suspended him, though local affiliates begged CBS brass to fire him.

The House Ethics Committee opened an investigation into who leaked the document to Schorr, who never coughed up his source; the committee ended up spending \$350,000, interviewing four hundred witnesses, and coming up with, yes, one leaker, Democratic congressman Les Aspin of Wisconsin—but he had leaked it to the CIA, not the press, as a political favor. In desultory fashion, Congress went on to debate intelligence reform through spring. But the version it settled upon was the weakest possible: two standing House and Senate select committees to exercise the same sort of lukewarm oversight as preceded the investigations, with no reform of the CIA's charter.

It never became any kind of campaign issue; in public opinion polls slightly more citizens disapproved than approved of the Pike and Church committees, and a majority feared they'd harmed national security. Pike gave an interview that spring to the *New Republic*. He told interviewer Oriana Fallaci, "It took this investigation to convince me that I had always been told lies, to make me realize that I was tired of being told lies." And he explained why he thought the intelligence scandals hadn't achieved the public concern of Watergate—why the "Year of Intelligence" had failed. "Oh, they think it is better not to know. There are too many things that embarrass Americans in that report. You see, this country went through an awful trauma with Watergate. But, even then, all they were asked to believe was that their President had been a bad person. In this new situation they are asked much more; they are asked to believe that their country has been evil. And nobody wants to believe that." The CIA itself believed it had beaten the investigators: "Where is the legislation, the great piece of legislation, that was going to come out of the Church Committee hearings?" Richard Helms asked. "I haven't seen it." The radical journalist I. F. Stone even argued in the April 1, 1976, *New York Review of Books* that Helms and Company must have been the ones to leak the Pike Report to Daniel Schorr, the better to provoke the backlash against them. Schorr published a postmortem for the Year of Intelligence: "You peel off Watergate and you find the Plumbers and the Ellsberg break-in. Peel off the Plumbers and you find the 1970 Huston plan. . . . But what would you find if you peeled off another layer and had a close look at that secret world from which these things had been launched?"

Alas, no one cared much. Otis Pike had hoped to ride his inquiry to the Senate. So much for that. Lucy, the psychiatrist from *Peanuts*, explained why: "It used to be that a person could live isolated from the world's problems. Then it got to be that we all knew everything that

was going on. The problem now is that we know everything about everything except what's going on. That's why you feel nervous. . . . Five cents, please!"

SUSPICIOUS TIMES. OR MAYBE NOT. AMERICA COULDN'T DECIDE. CAME the news on the last Wednesday in January that all major presidential candidates had released their medical records, the world apparently needing to know, for instance, about President Ford's hemorrhoid surgery and Senator Church's single testicle and Mo Udall's glass eye (a Washington joke suggested a Church/Udall ticket with the slogan "Keep your eye on the ball"). The next day, the House voted 323 to 99 against allowing any further money in the Defense Appropriations Bill to be spent in Angola. Ford replied, "They've lost their guts . . . and I think they'll learn to regret [it]." The *Times*' Anthony Lewis said his "phrasing had the delicacy of Joe McCarthy." The day after that, the Supreme Court dialed back the major reforms the congressional culture of suspicion had wrought: the 1974 campaign finance law banning the buying off of political candidates. Giving money to a presidential candidate, the justices now said, was the same thing as speech.

Buckley v. Valeo said that Congress could, if it wished, rewrite the law to enforce the \$1,000 limit on individual contributions—but only for candidates voluntarily accepting matching funds (as both Reagan and Ford had done, receiving their first federal welfare checks, as it were, on January 2, Reagan for \$100,000 and Ford for \$342,422). Until Congress rewrote the law, no matching funds could be disbursed. One of the conservatives who welcomed the news—in addition to Senator James Buckley, the plaintiff in the suit—was Irving Kristol, the neoconservative columnist. Before the year was out he published an impassioned essay in the *New York Times Magazine* called "Post-Watergate Morality: Too Good for Our Own Good?: The Reforms Aimed at Solving Today's Problems Are Likely to Constitute the Problems of Tomorrow," arguing that the kind of suspicion that produced the new campaign finance law was ruining the country. "Let me emphasize—in our post-Watergate atmosphere I had better emphasize—that I personally think bribery is a bad thing," he wrote. But the "spasmodic self-abuse" now in evidence, the "self-righteous moralism" and "vigilante-like passions with which the news media track down every sort of misdemeanor committed by officials," could only have baleful unintended consequences. It was the most coherent intellectual case so far for the Reaganite idea that suspicious circles were a very bad thing.

An unintended consequence of *Buckley v. Valeo* was that it advan-

tagged conservatives. For it contained a loophole: independent groups could spend whatever they wanted, on behalf of whomever they wanted, as long as they didn't coordinate it with candidates who accepted matching funds. Groups, that is to say, like the New Right letterhead organizations braying about Eskimo cannibalism and the Nazi regime of genderless restrooms to be ushered in by the ERA. The more ideological of the candidates were, the more this brave new campaign finance world would advantage them—and by the same token it would disadvantage moderates like Gerald Ford.

The surprise bonus didn't come a moment too soon. Those on the Reagan team were worried about an old problem: their candidate being dismissed as an extremist. They rejoiced when Governor Meldrim Thomson, the lunatic who wanted to issue nuclear weapons to the National Guard, surprised them by not asking to chair the campaign. They had managed to recruit instead New Hampshire's moderate Republican boss Hugh Gregg. "In getting Hugh Gregg," a Reagan manager said, "we were trying to establish we were not the candidate of the kooks." But the media, which had all but ignored him as a potential national force the previous year, were working overtime to establish that very proposition now that he was a presidential contender.

Call it the "Bedtime for Bonzo Problem." Garry Wills wrote in his newspaper column, "Reagan thinks he is being unfairly treated by the press, and he is probably right. It is unfair to expect accuracy or depth from him." Mike Royko referred to his "TV-anchorman face." The February *Harper's* featured "The Candidate from Disneyland," labeling him "Nixon without the savvy or self-pity, another pious boyhood pauper in whom God has confided the friendship of suntanned millionaires. Ronald Duck. That he should be regarded as a serious candidate for President is a shame and embarrassment for the country at large to swallow." More earnestly—and less dismissibly—Elizabeth Drew reported from the campaign plane, "Reagan is a dim figure. There is so much that we don't know about him. What is he doing with these public relations people as his key advisors? How does his own mind work? Is he a contrived figure? One cannot shake the idea that this is Ronald Reagan the movie actor. . . . His 'speeches' are actually sets of four-by-six-inch cards on which he has written paragraphs and anecdotes with a felt-tipped pen, and which he shuffles to give slight variations. His fund of knowledge seems to be made up largely of clippings—stories and polls he has come across that will make good material." But texts like these revealed more about their authors than they did about the candidate and his political prospects.

The media had said the same thing in 1966, when he won the Republican nomination for governor—and the "joke" had won the election nonetheless, as much because of their condescension as despite it. Reagan had learned what Nixon taught, that being despised by the patronizing Eastern Establishment swells, who pontificated knowingly about the "country at large," was nothing but a recommendation to the middle-class, middle-American "silent majority" who felt patronized by the same people themselves. He wasn't a "dim figure" to them. They knew, because they had listened to his radio broadcasts and read the proliferating numbers of conservative movement newspaper columnists from which he so frequently drew his material. Apparently you had to be a *New Yorker* writer not to understand what he was all about.

And you apparently had to be a *Washington Star* reporter not to know about another frequent Reagan reference from his broadcasts over the previous year—which, a February 9 feature in the *Star* reported, had "hit a nerve" with his New Hampshire audiences. The piece began:

WASHINGTON, Feb. 14—Few people realize it, but Linda Taylor, a 47-year-old Chicago welfare recipient, has become a major campaign issue in the New Hampshire Republican Primary.

Former Gov. Ronald Reagan of California has referred to her at nearly every stop, using her as part of his "citizens' press conference" format.

"There's a woman in Chicago," the Republican candidate said recently to an audience in Gilford, N.H., during his free-swinging attack on welfare abuses. "She has 80 names, 30 addresses, 12 Social Security cards, and is collecting veterans' benefits on four non-existing deceased husbands." He added:

"And she's collecting Social Security on her cards. She's got Medicaid, getting food stamps, and she is collecting welfare under each of her names. Her tax-free cash income alone is over \$150,000."

Neither that reporter nor the *New York Times* editors who reprinted his piece on February 15 seemed to know that Taylor had been the subject of scores of stories in the *Chicago Tribune* and other major newspapers since 1974 (indeed, the *Times* reported on her in December 1974); the *Trib* even had nickname for her, the "Welfare Queen." The *Washington Star* went on to patiently debunk the claim: she was being prosecuted for \$8,000 in welfare fraud, not \$150,000, though the prosecutor allowed that she may have made off with a greater amount. (The *Star* didn't point out that Reagan had no evidence to suggest her scams

were typical, that using Taylor to cast aspersions on welfare as such was like citing the exploits of a notorious bank robber in order to argue we shouldn't have banks.)

The *Star* article went on to debunk other Reagan claims: "We lopped 400,000 off the welfare roles" (it was 232,070). In New York, "If you are a slum dweller, you can get an apartment with 11-foot ceilings, with a 20-foot balcony, a swimming pool and gymnasium, laundry room, and the rent begins at \$113.20" (92 out of a total of 656 units in Taino Towers were six-bedroom apartments for large families; these had a high ceiling over only the kitchen and living room "to allow a space configuration that saves what would otherwise be wasted corridor space," and they went for around \$450 a month; the pool, gym, and laundry room served 200,000 neighborhood residents). Social Security was "\$2.5 trillion out of balance" (the chief actuary for the Social Security Administration explained that was only true "if the nation stopped producing new workers"). "No other country in the world puts so many taxes on business." ("According to tax experts, comparative taxation is a very difficult subject because it can be compared so many different ways.")

The same day there were also would-be embarrassing revelations about Reagan in the *Boston Globe* ("OIL, GAS DONATIONS FLOWING TO REAGAN") and the Scripps-Howard newspapers, which revived the story that he paid no taxes in 1971, after Ford released his own federal (\$106,000 paid on an income of \$250,000) and Michigan state (\$9,123) tax returns. Neither made much of an impact. How could a guy who sounded as warmly populist as this—"I believe that the President of the United States is what Harry Truman called him: he is the people's lobbyist in Washington . . . the only one there who was elected for all the people," responsible for "taking problems over the heads of the Congress to the people"—be a money-lusting plutocrat?

The \$90 million brouhaha having died down, he next faced a brouhaha over Social Security. Having promised in a Florida appearance to reverse the policy of denying benefits to retirees making more than \$2,700, he was asked how in the world the country could afford it. He said the only reason we couldn't was that the Social Security funds "are not invested, as they could be invested, in the industrial might of America"—in the stock market, where they should be. Ford said that this was "back door socialism" and threatened the existence of Social Security itself. Reagan gave back as good as he got: "It is unconscionable," he said at a senior citizens' home in Manchester, "for whatever political purpose, for someone to frighten people who are dependent on Social Security into believing that something may interrupt their pay-

ments." He, on the other hand, was working to preserve their payments: "If Social Security were an insurance company, they'd be put in jail by now. . . . Government is not the answer to the problem; government is the problem."

He was now eligible for Social Security himself, having turned sixty-five on February 6; if he was elected there would be only one president who had been older—William Henry Harrison, who lasted a month in office before croaking. It did not show. The *Globe* described the "old Gipper" campaigning tirelessly, hatless and coatless, taking questions from all comers for upwards of an hour, "while the reporters and photographers slowly turned gray with fatigue and cold." (His handlers might have wanted him to play down his age, but he wasn't having any of it, telling crowds outside a fire station of the time he dreamed of becoming a fireman—"back when horses were still pulling the engines.")

Ford arrived to a modest turnout on a clear day at the Manchester airport for his first election outside Michigan in his life, and his first competitive campaign since the early 1950s. The stylistic contrast was striking: Ford looked stolid, plodding, square (his face, literally, looked square); his voice sounded simultaneously flat and forced, too slow then suddenly too fast, as if he had glue in his mouth. The ideological contrast, meanwhile, he deliberately obscured. The elite's media culture might still be liberal. ABC News, for instance, ran a rueful Valentine's Day report decrying "rampant nationalism" at the Winter Olympics in Innsbruck, Austria: a poignant narration of the games' decline from the original goal of the revived modern Olympics as not "just a place for people to win medals, nor certainly a place to demonstrate the superiority of one political system over another," but rather "a festival of life and sport," to something where "the sporting links between athletes from five continents seemed distressingly absent." Athletes and coaches skipped the recital of the Olympic oath, Peter Jennings ruefully intoned; American fans "seem to see hockey as an extension of the Cold War on ice." Republican primary voters in New Hampshire were different.

So, standing behind a podium bedecked with the presidential seal, Ford offered Reaganite utterances that the U.S. government couldn't have built a Model T for less than fifty thousand dollars. He added boasts that the unemployment rate had dropped from 8.3 to 7.8 percent, and demagogic promises to keep open the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard and widen coastal fishing boundaries—then said that "anybody to the right of me, Democrat or Republican, can't win a national election." He sent surrogates to dole out the tough stuff. Henry Kissinger said negotiations with China and the USSR were "too delicate, too important

for world peace to be used for simply partisan sloganeering." A team including San Diego mayor Pete Wilson; treasury secretary William Simon; John Tower, the conservative senator; and Elliot Richardson, the Watergate hero, now commerce secretary, fanned out through New Hampshire for Ford. Wilson called Reagan "the worst governor in the history of the state." Richardson said the prospect of a Reagan presidency terrified him, and called his supporters "right-wing ultra conservatives." Reagan responded niftily to that: "I'm a little surprised by this statement about my so-called extremism," he said with a smile. "It does come rather strange because [Ford] tried on two different occasions to persuade me to accept any of several cabinet positions in his administration, and he did appoint me subsequently to his CIA investigating commission."

A reporter followed up: to dissuade you from running? "No," he chuckled. "I just thought he recognized my executive ability." An embarrassed Ford campaign was forced to confirm that what Reagan said about the cabinet offers was true.

The Granite State endured an infestation of hecklers. They came from an outfit called the People's Bicentennial Commission, whose chairman, Jeremy Rifkin, said "corporate America has conceived a Bicentennial plan to manipulate the mass psychology of an entire nation back into conformity with its vision of what American life should be," and whose sympathizer Douglas Dowd, a professor at Cornell, published a widely circulated Marxist interpretation of American economic history titled *The Twisted Dream*. "Now," Reagan had explained on the radio the previous October, "this group should not be confused with the official American Revolution Bicentennial Committee, though just to fuzz things up a bit the People's Bicentennial Commission did manage to squeeze some federal grant money out of some gullible bureaucrats to foster its effort to prove that the American Revolution was in reality a kissing cousin to Marxism and Leninism."

Ford handled them well enough. At the University of New Hampshire, before 3,500 people, a student in an ape suit, representing Ronald Reagan's most famous costar—not Bette Davis—asked the president a leading question about the abuses of big business. Ford, unruffled, said he couldn't understand one of the words, got him to repeat it, then answered the question. Reagan, though, veritably thrived in their presence—approaching them before they had a chance to approach him. "Don't let me get away with it," he told them. "Check me out. Don't let yourself be the sucker generation. Check out both sides of an issue. Don't let anyone indoctrinate you in or out of the question." Then he

gave his side. He quoted Rifkin equating America's eighteenth-century revolutionaries with Mao, Lenin, Che. "Do you agree with that?" Students at Dartmouth cheered.

"I'm disappointed. I don't associate those Americans with the genocide and the dungeon states created by Lenin and the others." "He's good," said someone who was supposed to be protesting against him, admiringly.

Not that he stopped saying what some might consider to be kooky things—for instance, accusing the National Education Association, the teachers' union, of working for a "federal educational system" like the one he said had been a "road to disaster" once upon a time, in Germany: "They changed their academic system to suit the rule of the dictator who was in charge at that time. . . . Where they had a national school system . . . when [he] said burn the books, they burned the books." Or, speaking to a "ranch breakfast" at a Holiday Inn ballroom in Kankakee, Illinois, on February 13, "I happen to believe there was a divine plan in the settling of this land between the oceans." Even the skeptical Elizabeth Drew had to admit how good he sounded doing it. "He comes across as a pleasant man who understands why people are angry. . . . He talks to people's grievances, but he doesn't seem mean," she wrote; his was "a respectful mad, a decent American fedupness. . . . It is the same list that George Wallace and Spiro Agnew attacked. . . . But Reagan comes across as doing it in a much nicer way."

Ford, tacking right once more with an announcement that he'd newly support the death penalty for some crimes, suffered his usual blight of bad luck. His vice president humiliated him by announcing he would not rule out running himself if Ford were defeated in a few primaries. (Reagan came back with another nice quip: "If he chooses to run that's fine, but they've got twenty-seven candidates on the other side tied for last.") The man who made Ford president, Richard Nixon, humiliated him by reemerging in the news with the announcement from San Clemente that he would be making a return trip to China, just before the New Hampshire vote. (William Loeb ran a front-page editorial: LET THE RED CHINESE KEEP HIM.) In the week before the balloting, polls had them neck-and-neck. Mel Thomson went on *Meet the Press* and said Reagan would win the New Hampshire primary by 5 points. A Ford supporter said, "If people are apathetic and don't vote, Reagan wins because those goddamned Reagan people will vote no matter what."

"MR. GELINAS, I AM DICK DENNY FROM ATLANTA, GEORGIA, AND I AM here on behalf of my friend Jimmy Carter."

Of the twenty-seven Democrats tied for last place in New Hampshire—well, there were only nine, but who was counting—once more it was Carter who defined the terrain, and once more that was the product of sedulous organization. Since April he'd had a cadre of political guerrilla warriors living and working out of a drafty, tumble-down house in Manchester—"Camp Carter." That fall, they established the "Peanut Brigade," Hamilton Jordan's revision of a program from the 1970 governor's race in which natives of Carter's Sumter County fanned out across Georgia carrying scrolls with testimonials to their man's character and integrity. Gone national, the cadre brought some ninety-eight from the Peach State to the Granite State in a Southern Airways charter, ages fifteen to seventy-eight, including an air-conditioning contractor, a history professor, a grandmother of six, the retired dean of Georgia Southern College (he smoked a cigar), the wife of Lieutenant Governor Zell Miller, a rehabilitated drug addict, and Starlett Mackendree, proprietor of Possum's Poke & Tote Shop in Albany, Georgia. Not to mention a complement from Carter's colorful family: Aunt Sissy, Cousin Hugh—and Ruth Carter Stapleton, the candidate's sister, proprietor of a faith-healing ministry, who in a story soon to become famous led her brother to a "born again" experience during a walk in the woods after his crushing 1966 loss in his first gubernatorial race. They arrived in New Hampshire on February 4 to subzero weather and three feet of snow, which made for splendid pictures on that evening's news when many threw snowballs for the first time in their lives.

The next morning, bundled up in boots and gloves and "long Johns," or thermal underwear—as their Boswell, Harold Isaacs, described the novel garment in a 1977 book—they headed out, baffled by New England street numbers, 100 on one side of the street and 1700 on the other. They aimed to reach forty thousand voters—one-third of the state's Democrats—and reached a third of their goal in the first three days alone.

A retired college dean said: "We've got a mighty good man running for President from our state."

A housewife, teeth chattering so hard she could barely speak, was invited in for a cup of hot coffee and told by her host, "Bless your heart, we don't even go out in this weather ourselves."

Roy Wood, from Roswell, Georgia, won a vote from a little old lady who thought he was the plumber she'd called and who was so embarrassed she invited him in for Greek wine: "They know we believe in him," he said of what the other outmatched campaigns derided as "peanut crackin' storm troopers" and "a group of carpetbaggers telling

New Hampshire to vote," and evidence—these opponents wished—that Carter didn't have enough local support to staff a campaign.

The Georgians returned home, and sent their own handwritten notes: to those they had met ("I liked your cute dog"; "I hope your boy is feeling better"), and those they had not ("Tim and Judy, Jimmy Carter did a great job straightening out Georgia," ran suggested language in the *Jimmy Carter Presidential Campaign—New Hampshire Campaign Manual* binder, in the section marked "Postcard Plan"; "I think he could do the same thing in Washington. I hope you'll support him on February 24")—six thousand letters in all.

Meanwhile, in the same way as with Reagan, now that Carter was plainly a serious contender the suspicious circles were taking a very hard look—and finding some very hard facts. In the *Village Voice* on February 9, the radical press critic Alexander Cockburn, in "The Truth About Jimmy Carter," tore apart his image as a post-Wallace racial reconciliationist. Cockburn printed a letter to a Southern woman, Mrs. Lena Dempsey, from the previous summer, in which Carter averred, "I have never had anything but the highest praise for Governor Wallace." And: "I think that you will find that Senator Jackson"—whose campaign strategy was to pick off Wallace's supporters by aping his antibusing stand—"and I are in close agreement on most issues." As to why he didn't support Wallace's presidential bid in 1972 as she wished, he told Mrs. Dempsey, "There are times when two men working toward the same end can accomplish more. I think you will find Governor Wallace understands this"—cynical stuff from a candidate whose commercials had him earnestly intoning, "I'll never tell a lie. I'll never avoid a controversial issue. . . . Watch television, listen to the radio. If I ever do any of those things, don't support me."

"Jimmy Carter's Pathetic Lies," which appeared a few days later in the March issue of *Harper's*, was considerably harsher.

There, journalist Steve Brill quoted the Georgia state archivist as saying the governor's staff "only sent me the speeches they wanted me to include"—not including, for example, a tribute delivered in 1970 for "George Wallace Appreciation Day" in Red Level, Georgia. In the piece, 1970 was a key year, the year of which Patrick Anderson gushed in the *New York Times Magazine* that Carter had run as a "pro-civil rights" candidate, even if "many conservatives seemingly chose to disbelieve him." They disbelieved him, Brill established, because Carter's campaign was fundamentally dishonest on the subject. A leaflet had circulated then, showing his opponent Carl Sanders getting champagne dumped on him by two black members of the Atlanta Hawks basketball

team, of which Sanders was part owner. Carter denied any knowledge of the item. But Brill quoted a public relations man who worked for Carter's adman, Jerry Rafshoon, one of his closest friends and advisors: "We distributed the leaflet. It was prepared by Bill Pope, who was then Carter's press secretary. It was part of an operation we called 'the stink tank.'" He also reported that the Carter campaign financed and produced the radio commercials of a third candidate, a black lawyer, to dilute Sanders's support among blacks. And that his claim to have opened day-care centers for the retarded staffed by welfare mothers was bogus. ("There is no program," the deputy director of the state mental health division said. "No one has been taken off welfare and put in any mental health job.") He debunked Carter's claim to have produced a \$116 million surplus in the budget (the state auditor told Brill the surplus had been \$91 million when Carter came into office and \$43 million when he left) and quoted Carter as deriding détente, like Ronald Reagan, and as supporting the death penalty, opposing the New York City bailout, and calling for the abolition of the corporate income tax.

Brill then cited the civil rights hero and Georgia state senator Julian Bond: "Jimmy Carter wouldn't be my first choice for president or even my fifth. The reason he gets such good press is that whenever the rest of the country thinks of Georgia, they think of Lester Maddox." Brill quoted the prominent New York liberal William vanden Heuvel, a confidant of the late Bobby Kennedy, who touted Carter as "someone who has stood with us on the right side in every fight that's been important to us over the last two decades." He quoted that in order to record his incredulity: why were so many liberals embracing Carter as though he was one of them?

It spoke to another of Carter's political gifts: being all things to all people. The *New York Times* recorded him in colloquy with a voter who wanted to know if he was a liberal, a conservative, or a centrist. He replied, "I don't like to categorize, I don't see myself as liberal or conservative or the like. I'm a farmer, you know. Now, you ask most farmers whether they are liberal or conservative, and they often say conservative. The same with businessmen. And I'm a businessman, too." (He added, just in case he'd offended someone, "But that isn't to say all businessmen and farmers are conservative.")

It played off a favorite riff of his. As he wrote in his campaign autobiography, "I am a Southerner and an American. I am a farmer, an engineer, a father and husband, a Christian, a politician and former governor, a planner, a businessman, a nuclear physicist, a Naval officer, a canoeist, and, among other things, a lover of Bob Dylan's songs and

Dylan Thomas's poetry." But that all wasn't quite true, either: he was a warehouseman for other farmers, not really a farmer himself; not a nuclear physicist but a former member of Admiral Hyman Rickover's nuclear submarine corps who'd done a little bit of graduate work in engineering. In that autobiography he referred to what Northerners called the "Civil War" as the "War Between the States," a term that pandered to Southerners; asked by a young woman who his running mate might be, he replied, "I won't give you a name, but I'll tell you the qualities she'll have." To a group of schoolgirls who asked for his position on the Equal Rights Amendment, he said, through what would soon become his famous megawatt grin: "I can answer that in three words. I'm for it." The girls cheered; the candidate, complimented by a sympathetic reporter for his liberality, frowned and said: "Half those people probably oppose the ERA."

The anticynical cynic. And, as Steve Brill had documented, someone who got away with lies.

The consensus was that it couldn't last long. "He's trapped now that he's up front," observed the New Hampshire house's majority leader, chairman of the flailing Birch Bayh campaign. "He can't have it both ways if he wants to win. He's got to start answering the tough ones." But he did not. And still he kept winning recruits—among voters, and just as important, among the reporters who watched him do it with awe. He was all things to them, too.

Patrick Anderson, the *Times* writer, watched Carter give his standard speech to a Kiwanis meeting. Carter observed how Americans were "deeply wounded" by Vietnam, Watergate, inflation, recession. Then he would ask two questions: Could government be made to work again? And could it become a source of pride again? He answered them with the story of the time his towering naval commander, Admiral Rickover, interviewed him for the job as a nuclear submariner. The great man asked the young man if he had always done his best at the Naval Academy.

"I wanted to say yes. But I thought of all the times I'd read a novel or listened to classical records when I should have been studying. So I had to say, 'No sir, I didn't.'" The commander, the candidate told the Kiwanis crowd, answered him with a bark: "Why not the best?"

Wrote Anderson: "That, Carter concluded—and by then the room was hushed—was the question America must ask itself in 1976: *Why not the best?* . . . It was corny and self-serving, but it worked. The Kiwanians leaped to their feet, applauding. I too was moved. Perhaps all of us, cynical novelists and Kiwanians alike, sometimes wish we had

always been our best. Carter had touched his audience not with 'issues' but by tapping into emotions that were universal."

They yearned to believe. Reporters yearned to believe, too—like another *Village Voice* writer, the acerbic critic James Wolcott, who fell for Carter while watching him hang out in Atlanta with Bob Dylan, who fell for backing group, the Band. ("Carter's association with Rickover quickly surfaced in all early campaign conversations with what he considered the 'conservative' press," Spiro Agnew's former press secretary, Vic Gold, now a columnist for the *Washingtonian*, soon observed. "Whenever, however, talking to younger, non-Establishment members of the media, he spoke of his admiration for Bob Dylan, Gregg Allman.") Wolcott tried on a hipper-than-thou cynicism at the top of his copy—"The media are ready to accept Carter's emergence as the presidential symbol of Southern enlightenment"—then dropped it, embarrassed by his own knowing New York ways. Carter had told the story, a familiar one, of the little room next to the governor's executive office where he would repair to pray during difficult moments. "I spent more time on my knees as a governor than all the rest of my life," Wolcott recorded Carter saying, then wrote, "I started to laugh, then looked around at the faces beaming approval and bit my lip." Manhattan rock-and-roll hipsters, too, yearned to believe. Wolcott concluded, referring to the club where a new genre called "punk rock" was just then emerging from the Bowery grime, "Could a CBGB neo-classicist like myself conceivably vote for Jimmy Carter? A tentative 10-4."

It was working. All of it was working. So Carter kept burbling Sunday school bromides, dropping Dylan references, biblical references, Rickover references, Reinhold Niebuhr references (the political editor of the *Atlanta Journal* said of his former governor, "He'll quote some obscure philosopher you never heard of quicker than a cat can scratch")—and, above all, straddling issues. On amnesty for draft evaders. (The journalist Martin Schram wrote of his position, "It is not an answer; it is an art form—carefully constructed so as to diffuse the emotions of the subject and come up with something for everyone. The shorthand of it is that he starts out by saying he is against amnesty, but he winds up saying he is for pardon. And he tells interviewers, when asked, that he thinks there is a difference, even though Webster's defines 'amnesty' as a 'general pardon.'" Schram quoted that answer. It went on for well over a hundred words—with lots and lots of ellipses.) Some sort of straddle on desegregation (it was wonderful; but "forced busing" was wrong). And on Angola, where on February 9 Soviet- and Cuban-backed forces took Huambo, formerly New Lisbon, capital of the forces

backed by the United States. Mo Udall, point-blank, said, "President Ford and Secretary Kissinger want another Vietnam in Angola." Carter, all over the place, said that he was against military intervention "except in a clear-cut case of national defense," but that he didn't know what to do about Angola because the administration was keeping so much secret: nothing to offend anybody in that.

Udall was one of four liberals running seriously in New Hampshire. No wonder left field was so crowded: Warren Miller of the University of Michigan, one of the country's top political scientists, proclaimed the scientific conclusion: "Both parties would be wise to move their ideological centers of gravity in a liberal, left-of-center direction," given the emergence of a massive young "new left" coalition sure to soon form a more dominant force than the New Deal coalition Roosevelt crafted in the 1930s. And so there was Bayh (asked about Angola, he paused sadly, looked down, and said, "I don't know why we never learn," and mused about whether we had been "on the wrong side" in places like Vietnam). Sargent Shriver, former director of the War on Poverty and the Peace Corps, the husband of Kennedy's sister Eunice, tried, earnestly and ineffectually, to steal Carter's march ("decent and honest and truthful and fair—that represents what the American people are"). Fred Harris, a portly, booming populist whose motto was "The Issue Is Privilege," and who said the trouble with the War on Poverty was "that you can't really do something about poverty unless you're going to do something about the distribution of wealth and power." Milton Shapp, the Jewish governor of Pennsylvania and the only announced candidate not to qualify for matching funds, who handicappers thought was gunning for the vice presidential spot.

The talk everywhere was of drafting Hubert Humphrey, an old familiar name, as prophylactic against the anxieties of a new, unfamiliar time; people still talked up Ted Kennedy despite his repeated avowals, going back two years, that he wouldn't run. George Wallace was concentrating on Florida; Scoop Jackson, who was talked up as a front-runner through much of 1975, and whose distinct calling cards were his Wallace-like loathing of busing and his Reagan-like passion for taking on the Soviets, had decided to give New Hampshire a pass, too.

That left only one candidate chasing through the snow to monopolize the devotion of every New Hampshire Democrat who was not in the market for a liberal. And guess which candidate was ahead?

IT WAS DAMNED HARD WORK. UDALL'S SCHEDULE FOR A SINGLE DAY LATE in January included twenty-three events in seven cities in two states,

from six in the morning to nine fifteen at night. Walter Mondale, the Minnesota senator who distinguished himself on the Church Committee, asked why he'd dropped consideration of a bid way back in 1974, had said, "I found I did not have the overwhelming desire to be president which is essential to the kind of campaign that is required. . . . For one thing, I have no desire to spend the next two years sleeping in a different Holiday Inn every night." At least eight men at this point, Republican and Democrat, apparently still did have that overwhelming desire. The question, however, was how many, beyond the cadres of reporters who did it for a living, even cared.

"A DISENCHANTED ELECTORATE MAY STAY HOME IN DROVES," the *New York Times*' Christopher Lydon reported early in February: "In ivory towers and the back rooms of numerous campaign headquarters, distrust and disillusionment are found to be the essential attributes of the American citizenry in this Bicentennial year." He quoted one pollster, Peter Hart, who said that "the only majority we find is a cynical majority," and another who said that only 36 percent who voted in 1974 thought their votes "made a difference." Candidates like Carter, of course, built this insight into their very campaign plans. But Lydon quipped, "A practical question about such strategies is whether voters are alienated now from 'alienation campaigns.'" Fred Dutton, advisor to the presidential campaigns of Bobby Kennedy and George McGovern, noted how "people talk about 'somebody catching fire' in the primaries, but I say it will be a very small firecracker"—a nice Bicentennial image. "If people could have their way, they'd leave the presidency vacant for four years." Walter Dean Burnham, then of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, explained why: "The gap between beliefs and actions, between traditional values and the way the system is organized, keeps growing. All the major components of society are in crisis."

As the newsmagazines began collecting portraits of the candidates for possible New Hampshire covers, evidence for that insight abounded. One Bicentennial letter to the editor: "Having been born and raised in Milwaukee, I have always been proud to call it my home. Now—after having been mugged, having had my home burglarized . . . I leave Milwaukee with no regrets." Another, from the *Baltimore Sun*: "Women cannot walk the streets in broad daylight or at night without the absolute fear of rape." From small-town Portsmouth, Ohio: "The people aren't safe anymore, which is what our own city is getting like. It isn't safe to walk the streets in broad daylight anymore." Three of General Electric's most experienced nuclear engineers quit publicly on February 2, proclaiming that atomic power—"a technological monster, and it

is not clear who, if anyone, is in control," one called it in his resignation letter—ought to be banned. A few weeks later a plant safety coordinator at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission quit, saying his recommendations had been ignored and his bosses were evading their responsibility "by not telling the public and power licensing boards all the facts we know." In New York, an opportunistic B-movie distributor purchased an unreleased horror movie called *The Slaughter*, added an unrelated scene purporting to show the movie's director murdering two female crew members, and retitled it *Snuff*. Feminist protesters, ignoring the film critics who spotted a poorly produced hoax, claimed "the bodies of the two women were found sometime after the film was made." For who knew what nihilistic depravities weren't possible in this day and age?

More barbarities: The right-wing radio and TV evangelist Billy James Hargis denied true reports (the product of a "godless, left-wing pagan press") that he'd engaged in bisexual affairs with students at his American Christian College. The latest scandal from the days of Camelot peeled forth—that JFK had allegedly smoked pot with a prostitute. (According to a story in the *National Enquirer*, "at first JFK didn't seem to feel anything but then he began to laugh and told her: 'We're having a White House conference on narcotics here in two weeks.'" Two joints later, he told her, "No more, suppose the Russians did something now?") Although at that, it might not be long before prostitution was not illegal at all: in Philadelphia, 266 delegates to the American Bar Association's convention came within two votes of recommending the removal of all criminal penalties for exchanging sex for money.

New York magazine ran the first-person account of an officer in New York's 41st Police Precinct in the Bronx, the most violent in the city—"Fort Apache," the cops called it, a wasteland of buildings burned out by their owners for the insurance money, of junkies, of decent families barely holding on to their sanity. One thug fells another using, of all things, a bow and arrow—and then, when he's arrested, the perp's friends and family attack the precinct house with a hail of bricks. The cops have to barricade themselves inside. On another day a citizen stumbles through the front door shouting for help: "They threw my son off the roof. He's stuck between two buildings."

News was that the world as we know it might be ending, but that was an evergreen 1970s story; the latest twist was the suggestion by a deputy director of the National Agricultural Laboratory that global food supplies would soon be so scarce it was high time for folks to develop a taste for "locusts, termites, and other insects." "As the population explosion continues," Dean F. Gamble told the American As-

sociation for the Advancement of Science, "it may be impossible to continue to ignore these unexploited food resources." That article ran, in one newspaper, next to two pieces on developments in the latest financial scandal: multinational corporations including Exxon, Lockheed, Gulf, Northrop, and United Brands had admitted to funneling huge amounts of cash to foreign officials in exchange for their nations' business. The oil company Tenneco admitted to making payments "that may have been illegal to candidates and local officials in at least ten states." In Japan, a right-wing lobbyist was alleged to have been paid \$7 million to promote sales of one company's aircraft; the same company was said to have bribed Italian cabinet ministers to get them to buy its F-104s and Hercules C-130s. The *Financial Times* of London complained about the bribery complaints: "Without it, business simply would not get done!"

Then there was Patty Hearst's trial for armed robbery—and the outbreak of terrorism that ensued.

The trial had opened January 15 in San Francisco with jury selection, the nation once more riveted by the bizarre tale (it had been impossible to find jurors who weren't familiar with the case). The argument for the defense, led by celebrity lawyer F. Lee Bailey, was "brainwashing": Bailey endeavored to convince these twelve citizens, including a retired Air Force colonel, an airline stewardess, a housewife, and a self-employed potter, that Patty, a woman living a "most ordinary life," had been so abused by her captors, so terrified that her safety was linked to theirs, that, his psychiatric witnesses would demonstrate, they had drained her of her free will, rendering her a virtual child—a "prisoner of war for twenty months," just like the Korean War POWs whom Chinese mind-control experts had convinced to defect from the United States. (This was now popularly known as the "Stockholm syndrome," after a 1973 case in which a hostage in a robbery at the Sveriges Kreditbank in Sweden had an affair with one of her captors and proclaimed all of them "very nice.") The prosecution said it was absurd to call a woman a victim who had posed with the machine gun with which she helped rob a bank, who had avidly proclaimed herself a revolutionary even after her arrest, who had taken one of the gang members for a lover. *Time* called it "The Battle over Patty's Brain," and interviewed the nation's beloved, heroic experts on the psychological effects of captivity—Vietnam War POWs—to pass judgment. They were withering: "If you were weak and really screwed up beforehand, you might go over," said a retired Air Force colonel held captive for seven and a half years.

It was announced that Patty would testify on February 13, and that she would reiterate her defense lawyer's horrifying story: her kidnap-

ping by an armed gang; her confinement, blindfolded, in a narrow closet, which the supposed revolutionary hero Field Marshal Cinque would visit in order to sexually assault her. And then, in anticipation of that testimony, on February 12, a terrorist's time bomb went off at the famous Hearst Castle in San Simeon, California, causing \$1 million in damage to priceless art and just missing fifty-three visitors touring the mansion, which was now a state park. There would be many more bombings, a group called the New World Liberation Front soon promised—unless a quarter of a million dollars was put into a defense fund for two of Patty's former Symbionese Liberation Army comrades who were still proud revolutionaries.

The bombing was meant to intimidate a traitor to the revolution. The revolutionaries were dead serious. In direct examination by F. Lee Bailey, Hearst explained why she had never tried to escape: because she had been convinced the FBI would assassinate her, then blame it on the SLA to make them unpalatable to the masses. Bailey asked her why, after one of her comrades had been apprehended for shoplifting at a sporting goods store, she had opened fire with a semiautomatic rifle. Because, she said, she had been told how under "codes of war," she herself would be killed if she had not.

The next week, on February 18, as the Peanut Brigade made their second, homestretch trip to New Hampshire amid mounds of snow twenty feet high, the prosecution team, led by a Nixon appointee and former Young Republicans president, began cross-examination with a surprise tactic: inquiring about the defendant's pre-capture reading list. Black revolutionary George Jackson's *Blood in My Eye*. A novel by a black feminist, Rita Mae Brown's *Rubyfruit Jungle* (she admitted it "impressed" her). One book on the Wobblies, another on guerrilla movements in Latin America; sociologist G. William Domhoff's *Who Rules America?* "So in essence," a prosecuting attorney asked, "you were—would it be a fair statement to say—quite interested in revolution, social change?"

She admitted that, yes, "I was interested in social changes."

The judge, in a controversial decision, had allowed a text she had narrated about her confinement—the "Tania Diaries," as they become known—into evidence. It included statements like "I believe that the term 'brainwashing' has meaning only when one is referring to the process which begins in the school system and is continued via the controlled media. . . . Like someone said in a letter to the *Berkeley Barb*, I've been brainwashed for twenty years, but it only took the SLA six weeks to straighten her out." The prosecutors grilled her about that—

and pointed out, for instance, that though she had given a detailed description of the SLA apartment, she had never mentioned any closet. They asked about the year she had spent on the lam; on that particular subject, she took the Fifth Amendment forty-two times.

The next week the defense and the prosecution both called expert psychiatric witnesses. One of the defense's witnesses cited the Air Force's "survival, evasion, resistance, and escape" (SERE) training, which caused such controversy when it had been revealed in the press in 1973: mock POW exercises in which, the psychiatrist explained, formerly tough trainees frequently developed "an uncommon terrible fear . . . out of all proportion to what the reality of their situation was," and henceforth became as obedient as children—comparing that to Hearst's reasons for not trying to escape and her desperate need for her captors' approval. ("Did I do right?" she'd asked in the speeding getaway van after she'd opened her semiautomatic on civilians, he pointed out.) He referred to the dissociation suffered by Nazi concentration camp survivors, who couldn't even remember the cruel things they'd done to survive, and the case of Jozsef Cardinal Mindszenty, who while under confinement by Communists in Hungary was tortured until he confessed to absurd crimes like planning a third world war.

The defense psychiatrists, in other words, offered up what was essentially a left-wing view of the self—as plastic, protean, moldable—and of human beings as the product of their environment, *not quite* responsible for their individual decisions and acts.

A prosecution psychiatrist, conversely, said Hearst had been an anti-establishment hellion all along—telling a nun to "go to hell," described by her boyfriend as possessing an "[u]nparalleled . . . capacity for sarcasm." Another said: "I think this was all *in* her. In a sense she was a member of the SLA in spirit, without knowing it, for a long, long time." They argued that she was *one of them*: not Patty Hearst, girl-victim, but "Tania," under the revolutionary nom de guerre she had chosen. Or at least a left-wing sympathizer. And wasn't that evidence enough?

This was a right-wing view, a Reaganite conception: good guys and bad guys. And that was the view that was generally being embraced in the court of public opinion—where, if the Patty Hearst trial was taking shape as a proxy war on the meaning of the 1960s and what it had done to our children, the prosecution was winning. The *Arizona Republic* (motto: "Where the Spirit of the Lord Is, There Is Liberty") editorialized that in the world according to F. Lee Bailey, "Any felon could claim that psychological conditions in his home during childhood spawned

criminal acts. A thief could claim that his family's pressure on him to acquire more belongings promoted stealing. The possibilities would be endless." The *Detroit Free Press* said an acquittal would rationalize any criminality committed by "the poor, or mistreated, or culturally deprived." The *Baltimore Sun* claimed the very "concept of responsibility that forms the core of criminal law was at stake," and a student wrote a letter to the *Denver Post* saying the stakes were even higher: if Patty went free, "It would show others that the United States is getting weaker while the underworld parties are getting stronger."

Expect more Patty Hearsts, the argument seemed to go: unless the nation got with the way Ronald Reagan saw the world.

ON FEBRUARY 21, REAGAN ARRIVED IN NEW HAMPSHIRE FOR ONE LAST visit, with the actors Lloyd Nolan and Jimmy Stewart in tow—and baffled and frustrated his managers by ordering his campaign plane to Illinois, where he made a nostalgic tour of his birthplace in Tampico, which housed an honorary Reagan for President national headquarters. (A *New York Times* reporter came up to Peter Hannaford: "Where's the manger, upstairs or down?") In the receiving line a local planted a wet kiss on his wife. ("He was hustled off by outraged aides while she searched for a Kleenex," a historian recorded. "And that part of Illinois was declared terra non grata on future trips." Reagan did not return until 1992.) The entourage made its way to the grammar school where he attended third grade, his classmates now reassembled for a photograph ("they all looked about twenty years older than Reagan"), then a big rally at Tampico High School (which he hadn't attended). "Oh my, such memories here," he said. "You could get bathed in a warm bath of nostalgia."

In front of his honorary national headquarters, he presented himself to the crowd balanced between two parked cars some thirty inches apart, one foot perched on each bumper, an extraordinarily graceful act, the long, lithe lines of his body stretched taut, the face of the aide behind him wrinkled with concern—but his own face radiating joy. Gerald Ford spent the days leading up to the balloting with far less grace. There was one of his campaign chairmen, Senator Norris Cotton, introducing a speech by Ronald Reagan, calling him "my kind of fellow." Then the thirty-seventh president of the United States, Richard Milhous Nixon, monopolized the front pages by landing in China, a development Ford had been sufficiently desperate to prevent that he considered impounding the plane the Chinese sent out to fetch him, as payment for confis-

cated American property from the revolution; he decided against it for fear it would be discovered and draw him even closer to the disgraced president in the public mind. Senator Richard Schweiker from Pennsylvania, a strong Ford supporter, said Nixon had timed his trip deliberately, to sabotage Ford and open the field for his friend John Connally. On Election Day in New Hampshire, as a jury in San Francisco heard testimony that Patty Hearst had used marijuana and LSD, Ronald Reagan was in Illinois taking one more occasion to minimize Nixon's alleged sins. Asked if he would offer Nixon a cabinet post, he said he wouldn't be able to answer "until history itself . . . tells us more about the situation that saw his resignation . . . unless history gives us a different perspective on Watergate than the one we have now." He then said the investigations of the CIA were "one of the most irresponsible things that a Congress of the United State has ever done."

At midnight on February 24, the Californian was 1,500 votes ahead—too close for the papers to declare a winner, which they were able to do only the next day: 49.4 percent for Ford, 48 percent for Reagan—a difference of 1,587 votes. And though Reagan's chairman, Mel Thomson, had badly botched the expectations game with his prediction of a victory by 5 points, and though he leaked a poll that Evans and Novak reported that predicted him winning by 8, the very idea of coming within 1.5 percentage points of a president—Lyndon Johnson had won New Hampshire by 7.7 points over Eugene McCarthy in 1968, and was shocked enough to soon abdicate his reelection bid—was earth-shattering. Journalists watched "a senior White House official get wobbly from long swigs from a tumbler kept full of a dark amber liquid." Might Gerald Ford become the first incumbent president to be denied his party's nomination in a competitive race since Chester Alan Arthur in 1884? It now seemed like a possibility.

Another thing that was not supposed to be possible in these modern times: "Carter should understand," Vic Gold had written, "that no ex-Governor of Georgia can become a Presidential nominee, even if there weren't a nonrecognition factor to overcome. No. He can't because he is going up against a prejudice bigger than one John F. Kennedy faced in 1960. Much bigger, more complex: if Jesus Christ Himself returned to proclaim Roman Catholicism the Truth Faith, Christianity could survive; but if He spoke His parables in a Georgia accent, St. Patrick's would convert to a mosque within a week."

Think again. Sargent Shriver, brother-in-law of a sainted Democratic martyr: 8.7 percent. Fred Harris, senator and former Democratic National Committee chairman: 11.4. Birch Bayh, Mo Udall, congressmen

and onetime projected front-runners, 16.2 and 23.9 percent, respectively. "Jimmy Who?": 29.4 percent, something like a landslide—although whether it was possible to count something as a landslide in this age of apathy was an open question. Only 32.5 percent of the Granite State's voting population voted, way down from 1972 and 1968, despite hard-fought contests in both parties, the sort reporters called, on instinct, "closely watched."

The election was a close one, with Ford leading Reagan by a narrow margin. The results were surprising, given the odds. Ford, who had been the underdog, emerged as the victor. The election was a testament to the power of the incumbent president. Ford's victory was a surprise to many, but it was not unexpected to those who had followed the campaign closely. The election was a close one, with Ford leading Reagan by a narrow margin. The results were surprising, given the odds. Ford, who had been the underdog, emerged as the victor. The election was a testament to the power of the incumbent president. Ford's victory was a surprise to many, but it was not unexpected to those who had followed the campaign closely.